

Oboreru IF



Prologue

- — I heard a voice full of hate.
- A sound which would not leave my ears.
- — Words imbued with hatred followed me.
- — It was frightening, so frightening and I could not bear it.
- — I was being crushed by the pressure of this noise which did not obscure its malice.
- It gripped onto my soul and would not let go.
- The more you depend on your life, the more certain it becomes that you will hurt someone else.
- — It was because, first and foremost, I was apologetic and I felt sorry that we were sinking still into the depths.

Chapter 1

— My neck,

I found myself held down by a light body as if mounted like a horse.

Small knees pressed sharply into my shoulders as I floundered underneath. A dainty white arm covered in cuts loomed in my vision, choking down on my neck. Those gashes reminded me of crimson flowers, I thought, before feeling irritated at myself. That was really failing to read the mood.

— Breathtaking, breathtaking, it is breathtaking when your neck is being throttled.

"_____"

Right in front of his eyes were a pair of pupils glowing with passion.

Endless fury and hollow despair stretched deep, deep in those large round eyes.

"I might fall into those bottomless eyes..", Subaru thought blankly.

"Ah, it is ..."

— Badum-badum, badum-badum, badum-badum, those were the sounds I made as I flailed around wildly.

It was not that I was struggling so much in an effort to get away.

Thoughts of escape had already disappeared by evening. So my struggles

were not an expression of my will to live, but merely a tantrum born of sheer suffering. My body cried out uselessly on its own.

The brain was lacking oxygen, the mind had lost its will to live, but the body was still writhing in protest.

There are differences in everything, just seeking balance is bad, I hate that way of thinking.

Can't I just die quietly? I want to just die quietly.

As peacefully as possible, like I was simply going to sleep, that was the most enjoyable way to die for me.

But such a wish was not to be. Far from being granted, my fate was really to be the complete opposite of that.

"Kuh, ku, ku-hu"

With wide-open eyes bulging from their sockets, biting down hard and foaming at the mouth, with a body grown emancipated after only a few short days, it was in this state that I twisted and groaned like a wounded beast.

It's my last chance to act along, should I do it?

It's my last chance to say what's most fitting, should I try it?

Hey, why and how was it that I came to be in this kind of situation?

"— What's, so funny?"

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

Unlike these animal groans, this was a cold but clear sound.

The owner of those eyes laden with fury, her lips pressed thin as she squeezed his throat, looked up at the sound of the voice.

"_____"

What's wrong, even if you ask me that, I can't find the answer.

There is nothing funny here in the first place. There isn't, so what are you even asking?

The question was confusing. Some rude kind of nonsense, a riddle.

Even if someone forced me to reply, I wouldn't have any answers. But the time I spent waiting in silence still felt like lying on a bed of thorns, he thought.

Absurd. Flung around like this by the force of some divine providence, just how many times has it been already?

"— What's, so funny?"

There's nothing weird like that.

"Huu, heh, hee-hee"

Then, is it the person asking that has something wrong with them?

Or, is it that this person just failed to read the mood, and so they are having fun at the moment?

Are they enjoying the sight of this woman mounting me like she's on horseback, strangling away at my neck? If you say that, then any sense of liking them gets flipped on its head, he thought.

"— What's, so funny?"

There is nothing wrong here. Even though there is nothing, this question keeps getting thrown out there again and again.

Throwing, not even. She's not that far away. That's not even it.

Close enough to feel each other's breath, gazing up at the beautiful face of the girl opposite him, he was surrounded by her voice. Blanketed in it.

She had, without words, without hurtful abuse, shown clear hate in her voice.

"— What's, s-?"

Do it.

This question that repeatedly sought an answer suddenly faded away like mist.

"— Euh"

Tilt, the face of the girl in front of me suddenly tilted to the left.

Her angled neck does not rise. Still slumped to the side, that girl's body crumples onto the white snow. Of course, as the thin arm formerly wrapped around his neck had also come loose, Subaru's path to suffocation had ended halfway through.

Coughing, the bitter taste of blood rose up from my neck.

Collapsing lungs inflated before receding again, sending much-needed oxygen through my body in turn. That is also a reflex, survival instinct. If someone just refused to breathe and died, then they wouldn't be working properly.

Questions like whether that would be a normal thing for a person to do or not, I don't want to discuss that right now.

"_____"

The feelings in Subaru's heart that had, up to this moment, accepted death, now faded away. It was replaced with a desire to live in the name of more oxygen, an obsessive desire that could not be let go. Desperate, striving, he coveted more to the point of looking pathetic.

While like that, ceaselessly filling his lungs with cold air on every breath, he came to realize.

"_____"

In the center of that fluffy white snow that was piling up around, before him lay a girl collapsed on her side.

Her face and lips had grown pale with poor circulation, raising her unrealistic beauty to even greater heights. Those exceptionally glittering white eyes were empty and spread wide, a telltale sign that a life was ending.

Looking carefully, it was a sight that did not seem well-fitted for the snow.

That maid uniform revealing bare shoulders and thighs, this cloth material that should ward off the cold isn't nearly thick enough to do so. The nape, the ears, and other areas easily chilled were being hit by the wind.

The state of that bared form—Moreover, aside from her, this side was in the

same condition as well.

"——"

— Shiver-shiver, shiver-shiver, shiver-shiver, like that this out-of-place Subaru was trembling.

Whether it was the cold, or the strong melancholy of his heart that was the culprit, he did not know.

In this situation, rather than worrying about the state of his body, instead he could not take his eyes off of the girl in front of him.

"—M"

Even fallen over in the snow, with half her face buried in it, she still looked beautiful.

That unquenchable hate and fury was inflaming that slender body and keeping it alive, he could only think that. Covered in wounds to that extent, it was a strange situation that this girl was still alive.

"——"

Pure-white snow, and around him and the girl, countless corpses were lying around.

Those beasts that consumed life, indulged in it, and destroyed the soul, all before the wind of this girl had turned to corpses. So, in this place, the survivors, were only two. Himself and the girl, but two.

That, too, in a moment, could immediately become one, become zero.

"——"

What is going on, next to the girl mumbling that he slowly stood.

The emancipated fingers on both his hands were discolored. In those fingers whose temperatures had dropped significantly, there was no feeling remaining. Weak itching was the only evidence that these fingers were still attached to the body.

Shaking about those fingers that couldn't be relied on, he lifted up a head-sized stone.

Without any reason or purpose, it was just a stone that happened to be there. The fact that he lifted it secretly brought him much relief.

Comparing the stone in his hand with the collapsed girl.

For a moment, to him, that held stone seemed to be making a similar face to the one who had fallen.

He did not know if he was laughing. But the burning image this finally brought to his mind was heated. An oni, just flesh, and shoving it into an enemy, just that.

As if having pulled it up by the roots, in both hands he lifted the rock skyward.

That action, looking up at it, the owner of those pink pupils spoke with a faint voice, but with an unquestionably clear voice,

"—Definitely, I will kill you."

— — The sound of something hitting something hard, in the snow-blanketed forest slowly, slowly echoed.

It echoed.

Chapter 2

— That day, Roswaal L. Mathers' broken mansion quietly collapsed.

The first to notice the collapse was, the woman more than anyone else who desperately struggled to maintain it, because of that her manner could have been said to be vicious.

"_____"

The master of the house, Roswaal, she had received from him a great benefit.

So hearing that the maid sisters who had taken care of the mansion no longer held their positions, knowing then that the owner had nobody to take care of him, she immediately rushed to his side.

The sight of that master who had become pale drove a great deal of pain in her chest.

Even those two suspiciously glinting, brimming with confidence, differently-colored pupils.

Which if said nicely could be called quirky but really were more weird. That perfectly sinister clown makeup, even that strange aesthetic which seemed like nails scratching to the senses of others, in all that having lost his light, that was Roswaal.

After receiving such a reunion with him - - - Frederica tightly grasped her hand into a fist.

"It cannot end like this. Even for the sake of those children, I-"

If she did not protect her position, if she chose that, then it would become even more desperate, was her thought. Not thinking of if something could be done, but rather focusing on hope and wanting to do something, for that reason she had started to act.

To raise the mansion once again, she moved, and even if she did not know how, with a hand seeking cooperation she would drag the master by the arm every day, busily running around.

There was in Frederica no thought to stop and fret.

Even sometimes feeling pain that might have slowed her feet, she always desperately lifted up her head and continued on.

If in this place I collapse, then I am – not worthy to gaze upon the faces of those precious to me.

Since some point, she had forgotten to laugh. Since some point, she had forgotten to spend the night resting correctly.

Even then, desperately, Frederica sought to protect the person she loved, to not let go of the bubbles spreading away on the water and to grasp them in her hands.

Even with that,

"— Ah"

When Frederica finally realized, it was already too late for everything in the mansion.

In that frozen white hallway, her world flipped upside-down as her shoes were frozen, she did not recognize where she was.

The sight of the once-familiar mansion had become distinctly different from what she knew.

The carefully-cleaned corridor, the kitchen where she had cooked, and where she had worked with her hands for those that needed her care, in front of her eyes had now become a clouded white world.

And as for who had done all this—,

"Great Spirit-sama ..."

"Sorry, Frederica, you are not to blame. It is just that, if I would like to protect my most precious thing, then this is the best decision to make."

Saying this, showing its face and floating in the air, was a small cat with gray fur.

So tiny as to ride on the palm of a hand if desired, but in that small body holding definitive power, it was a portrait of that kind of being.

She did not want to believe. But now there was no reason to doubt.

There was the one who had changed the mansion to this white end.

"Why, do this ..."

"I said it already, all my actions are for Lia. Lia leaving the forest, that act is what she wanted to do. For that girl's safety, I thought.. But there is no worth here anymore. It must have fallen to somewhere else."

"——"

"Roswaal was my mistake. That man is a pitiful criminal."

Shaking their head, Puck shot at her with voice devoid of any emotion.

At those words, Frederica stopped breathing. And with that their sharp fangs firmly closed shut.

"— — The master of this house, insulting them to me, as a maid, it cannot be forgiven."

"You, too, are a pitiful child. It is just you that is desperate to protect this fallen place."

"Please stop talking as if you are referring to the past, it is not over yet."

She called sharply. Without having a chance, towards the great spirit.

Gazing in front of him at that Frederica and what she said, this kitten narrowed their round eyes and gazed with pity on their face. That movement and expression in an existence, which to some extent smelled like humanity, Frederica leaned forward and lowered her body at it.

"Emilia will be sad."

That one brief hesitation from the small great spirit might give her the win, this was what Frederica was hoping.

But,

"Unfortunately, since I am weak to Lia. I cannot move on from my child, you know. Because of that."

Even a moment's hesitation, some small opening, from that great spirit did

not appear.

As the world of difference between her and Puck reflected in her eyes, she firmly grit her teeth.

Whether it was the beginnings of regret or grief, it was too late to to be felt.

Just a simple white breeze blew, and from that the woman named Frederica stood there frozen.

The collapse of Roswaal's mansion was beginning.

Chapter 3

When he noticed signs of collapse, it was all already too late.

"_____"

With ghostly footsteps Roswaal in his own house walked.

The frozen mass of air underfoot broke with a clatter, and a chill breeze tickled his nape.

His neck drew away from the sudden chill, a physiological reaction that could be felt strangely.

Nowadays choosing clothes, applying makeup to his face had both been left to Frederica.

That diligent and enthusiastic girl was, no matter how, trying to pay back the grace she had received from this place, but it was too late. His heart that shouldn't have felt anything hurt a little.

— — Roswell's secret path at some point quietly lay cut off.

"Ram, Rem"

Maybe it was the loss of the oni sisters.

The existence of those two were necessary to his secret plan, so if they were gone then a key part was not possible. When he realized it had all upended, Roswaal had already been left alone.

Four hundred years later, when Roswaal had realized his long prayed-for path had been broken, he could no longer stand on his own.

"— — Ram"

A short mumbled name, it is the name that conveys the biggest regret.

Originally, the possibility that it would become like this, he had already considered it.

Actually, the likelihood that it would end badly like this, that possibility was much higher. It was because of this that Roswaal had taken insurance on his own existence.

When his end finally came for him, he wanted someone there that could receive it happily.

Her, dying before him, had ruined the last remaining cogwheel in his plans.

"_____"

So then, the sight of Roswaal walking in this mansion was strange.

He had lost his reason to stand already, and his reason for walking was already gone from him.

"Master, please return yourself to how you were before. So the two of them -
— "

Many times Frederica had so appealed to Roswaal.

With Roswaal falling into despair, the task of taking care of her dispirited master had fallen to her. Who put in much effort in trying to persuade him to recover, with tenacity and devotion.

So remained in him the power to walk in this now-frozen mansion.

In the middle of the hallway, wandering without aimlessly, his sight now turned to the scenery beyond the window.

So he saw the frozen world, and the form of the girl with blonde hair who was trying to resist it.

"_____"

That to not protect her here would not acceptable, he perhaps thought.

Or it could simply be acting on reflex, he didn't know.

Reflexively, or if not done then this will not do, enough remained of his mind in the body for that much.

So now, Roswaal slowly spread his arms wide, readying himself to spend a vast amount of mana -

"— — Euh!"

At that moment, Roswaal barely avoided the bright light of the slash that targeted his neck.

"—Ah, to be able to dodge this is outside of my expectations. Perhaps this is not just the court magician but someone that holds some level of skill in martial arts as well?"

From behind Roswaal's back is calls out a light voice.

In this frozen corridor with speed as if slipping, or the speed of something burning, it took him that long to look that way and stare at the sound of blue-haired young man's voice.

“That movement just now, only a bit would not do it. Honestly, I marveled at it.”



Clad in a blue kimono, and beneath it feet that show a sure grasp of stance, on that waist with two clasped swords, one of which was tapping his shoulder with a dun-dun sound.

An appearance that is clean-cut and seems to fit well with a smile. Giving an impression like a young child, playful shining eyes and that long tied hair somehow offered him an androgynous look.

But from his eyes, despite that sense clearly emanates — just by receiving that gaze, the thought of being killed, visions of death also comes to mind alongside that previous good sentiment.

“If you are a person confident in more than just magic, my heart is relieved of a burden, it really is a great help. Anyway, a task too normal is not fitting with my aesthetic. No, if told to do so then I do but if possible, I want to avoid getting the villain treatment.”

"Like in the rumors, aren't you pretty noisy?"

"Oh, is that my rumor? I can not help it. To be a celebrity even in such a place? Hehehe, I wish it was not such a strange rumor though."

The young man flatteringly spoke as he scratched his head with a shy smile.

While looking at this scene, helping Roswaal to solve the situation that happened to him, his sluggish thoughts were burned with a fire that shook him awake.

That scorching heat existing in his left arm was that burning sensation.

"_____ "

"But that arm, if action is not quickly taken then all your blood will be drained, no?"

"Your advice, I am grateful for it."

In the young man's view, Roswaal curved his lips in an arc like drawing a painted gash.

That Roswaal's left arm was missing near the shoulder, and what had used to be attached there, like a fallen doll, was almost unrealistically rolling on the floor.

I had my arm cut off when I avoided the first attack on my neck.

After hearing this advice to act, Roswaal grasped his wound, and an instant burst of fire directly stopped the bleeding. Those horrible pangs of pain tearing through his brain with rigid cheeks he bore it.

This extreme emergency treatment, the young man just gazed lightly at.

"I thought magicians were timid, but this side is not.. I mean, but the reference for that was actually someone I know?"

"You said you knew, Cecilus Segmunt."

"_____"

"The Vollachia Empire's strongest Nine God Generals? As its top-ranked 「Blue Lightning」, news of that is even famous throughout Luginica."

"Oh, that is an honor."

At Roswaal's low voice, the young man—Cecilus Segmunt responded with elegant manners.

There was no reason to hide his identity. There was no reason to hide his name in the first place, so he may as well act coolly dignified and confident.

Watching those mannerly ways with their dramatic productions, Roswaal sighed.

"But that aside, what is happening now, I wonder? ~Aah, it couldn't be, at this time when the Luginica Kingdom's new ruler is being decided, if it came out that Vollachia Empire is moving in violation of the treaty?"

"Oh, that's a misunderstanding. Right now I could say I am on vacation and on break, or I could say I am unemployed. Anyway, this business has nothing to do with the Empire." he said.

"_____"

"This is not some strange attempt at humor. My actions, the Empire is not involved in it at all. Of course loyalty to His Excellency still lies in my heart ... But to me, my own origin is something I have."

With a grand gesture, Cecilus emphasizes that he and the Empire are not working together. It is hard to believe it unconditionally. But these actions of his, if he really was acting as an agent of the Empire, is simply not sensible.

For this reason, Roswaal narrows pupils colored with twin hues and asks Cecilus.

"Then it is even more curious. That you have even abandoned your position at the Empire and have come here. What exactly was it that could move you all the way over, I woouoonder."

"It's easy to understand —the way of the heavenly sword, to that step that was promised."

"The way of the heavenly sword?"

At that reply Roswaal frowned his handsome brows.

Cecilus, who saw this, nodded deeply in reply. "Yes.", he murmured. The expression was just as if he was laughing, but a crucial difference lay in the emotion of the pupils.

In addition to joy and pleasure and happiness, there was also the 「Blue Lightning」, something that drew a person to their eyes.

"It is a secret that I have never spoken of to any living person. With this, to accept help with resolving this when that is done, it is inevitable to accept that opportunity."

"How unexpected, you do not seem to be type to be a puppet of another person."

"Being controlled by others, or merely accepting the stage that fate has provided, is there not just a subjective difference between the two? I accept this world's starring role, and that script for it all, too. Keeping that then, the scene should be unfolding as if there is an actor even without following a script, perhaps."

Regarding the shrugging Cecilus with his colorful eyes, Roswaal simply nodded.

Indeed, at the strength of his argument, he gave up fighting against it. That forceful conviction and philosophy that Cecilus had built over many victories.

To make that idea bend, it was impossible for the Roswaal who had lived four hundred years for an obsession of his own.

To that Roswaal with a fondness for consistency, that philosophy seemed attractive to him, too.

"Likely I do not really hate you, I rather quite like you. But because this is also my role ... The Lugnica Kingdom's court magician, Roswaal L. Mathers, I will be taking that neck of yours with me."

Seemingly acting in his own way of politeness, Cecilus returned the katana he once held into its sheath. And with a slash of another weapon drawn, a wondrous sight was revealed to the world.

The beauty of the sword was just as is said, a slashing of the blade imbued with unbelievable power.

"— Once again, now with the dream sword, Masayume."

"Is it a slash of a sword that eats at the holder's soul, then? – Cecilus, may I ask one thing?"

With the overflowing sight in front of him, Roswaal easily raised a finger.

In front of that bloodied and frozen atmosphere. In that situation, as if he had failed to read the mood, he asks for Cecilus a single question.

"My weak points are that I don't listen to people and I don't really have the composure of someone over 20 years old. In the empire I have gotten in trouble for that several times."

"Your employer's name is?"

Cecilus who was asked such, his eyebrow lightly raised.

Lowering the blade away while drawing his feet back. Slowly, leaning forward with his upper body,

"Gossiping about other people is a bad thing, but, because of that, I had heard some backwards talk about 「Purge King」... But to you, because I have been asked to reveal the correct name to you.."

Having given that introduction, Cecilus wet his lips with his tongue.

After a few minutes or so of delay, he said,

"_____"

As the same moment as that name reaches the ears, a blur jumped from the floor of the mansion, and Cecilus disappeared.

That he had gone from the very world, it was fast enough to mistake for that.

「Blue Lightning」, fitting that name, the fastest arcing bolt, and that moment drew ever closer.

Crossing the distance like that, it was instantaneous.

But at that same instant, Roswaal was muttering with a smile on his lips.

"So it was you, after all."

Even before than the sound of those words appearing in the world, the second katana, its trajectory swung even faster.

Just before everything went dark, Roswaal pondered in his mind.

About the girls that had been at the mansion.

Those girls who had been embroiled in his own secret path, and in the end had been left no happiness at all.

—You have neither right nor time to apologize, and with those last words everything faded away.

Chapter 4

「Door Crossing」functioned by connecting the Forbidden Library's entrance to another doorway, it was merely just that.

Due to its simple effect, the versatility of「Door Crossing」was quite high, and she was proud of this outstanding magic. But, just like for any other magic, it was also the case that「Door Crossing」was not wholly flawless.

If its structure was to be exploited, that useful nature could turn into weakness. Because of this, the existence of the Forbidden Library and the effect of「Door Crossing」must not be revealed to outsiders.

So it was, to others, something that would not do to be revealed.

———Because of that. Such a situation was inevitable, she thought.

“What was that, you're trying to be funny, I suppose?”

At the moment the Forbidden Library's door had opened, Beatrice herself already understood that she was being called on.

That spacious mansion with its many possible choices of doors existed, and yet, Beatrice had forcibly been guided to a single one.

That method was simple. ————In a situation where the other doors could not open, then it could be done.

The means to seal「Door Crossing」was to remove any choice of doors to connect to.

That task with diligence had been carried out, and in the mansion 'doors that could open' had now been limited to one.

And who had helped in putting this to use, that it must have been her precious nee-chan she understood well.

Being put off-balance by this realization was inevitable. That was because, it made her sense of existence unclear.

But even with that, so, begrudging her nee-chan was not fitting for her. Because of this, Beatrice, without holding any sort of resentment for her brother, instead simply seeking to confront him directly pulled wide open those doors.

“——Yo, Beatrice.”

Drawing through the opened door without hesitation, calling for Beatrice, he was there waving his hand.

That voice and attitude, she remembered it. Because of this, Beatrice's body shivered with fear.

The face from her memories, and the face now seen in front of her, not every detail seemed to match up.

While the general parts from memory agreed normally, that they were already almost like another person was the situation.

“You. Why are you giving me that look, I suppose?”

That dark, dark glint in his eyes beheld in front of her, Beatrice shook her head.

Far from improving, it had coldly changed in a way that drew even more revulsion.

A rarity, those black hair and black eyes remained, and in those eyes that had lost their shine darkened emotions were dimly revealed.

Surrounding those eyes reminiscent of gloom were deep dark circles, thin and frail cheeks lay underneath, and what could be seen of the fingers displayed a corpse-like pallor.

With long dark clothes wrapping his body, his skin exposure minimized—— Among that united uniform of black, what stuck out was a bright red scarf. Just that, and that alone was quite strongly betraying his gloomy impression.

After that, for a while time passed.

But, even if you say that, this change is too much. Can it be that this human had become so different?

“You, your mood has seriously changed, I suppose.”

“Saying that, you have not changed at all, then. Is your growth spurt over? Normally, after 2 years pass you become a little more mature.”

In a blank voice, to Beatrice’s words he replies with a joke.

Two years, was it. If he says that, then that must be how much time had passed.

Just two years, from Beatrice’s perspective, was like in the blink of an eye, it was that short of a feeling. To humans, especially to the one standing now in her sight, how meaningful were those years, she wondered.

——For that boy who seemed about to die at any moment, to return for revenge like this, was it that meaningful a stretch of time?

“I wonder if you remember, Beatrice, we ate together here.”

“———. That memory does not exist, I suppose. Eating together with you never happened.”

At that person’s words, Beatrice crinkled her brows.

Those two people facing each other were, in the mansion’s first floor kitchen. White cloth draped the table, and in the center seat was that person asking Beatrice a mysterious question.

“.....Ah, ah. That is, you wouldn’t know that, that just now, I was mean, always, mean, it’s always, me.”

“There was something.....No, that, hearing it now at this point, it can’t be helped.”

For a single moment, in Beatrice’s heart hesitation brushed past.

But, that girl in the blink of an eye killed those unnecessary distractions and sealed them away. And then. Towards that suspicious person, she pointed her small palm.

There, as the protector and librarian of the Forbidden Library, her pride———Or, to offer her body up to hold an unwanted post, a fleeting sense of duty permeated her.

“Getting your revenge on me, that might be what I deserve, I suppose. Even so, Betty has as Betty a role to fill, in fact. For that.....”

"———"

With strength, Beatrice in her own role rose to block any violence from that person, she sharply focused on it.

Seeing this, his expression dimly set. Something there, as if he was trying to enduring some difficult feeling could be seen, and at that moment Beatrice set down her foot.

"To take care of me, Beatrice.———Of me, didn't you contract to protect me?"

———At that moment, Beatrice came to a sudden stop.

".....Ah."

Contract, at that sound Beatrice's whole body was pierced with shock, and she grew stiff.

And that rigidness, as Beatrice's mind continued to think, it had not gone away.

Something of her mind was not the culprit. Physically, her movement were blocked. That was———

"Forgive me, but with this you will not be able to move, it's that."

At Beatrice's side, having risen from the shadows, one person was revealed there.

There, wearing a disheveled black kimono and biting on a gold-colored kiseru pipe with sharp teeth, stood a tall, shabby-looking Wolf Human.



Gazing at her with with moving narrowed eyes, he was looking down at the Beatrice that only came up to his waist. Finding no emotion in those small pupils, Beatrice's neck lightly shivered.

"That, is....."

"Binding the shadows, outwardly it is like the wondrous technique of a ninja, it could be said. Think of it as an art. Even so, you will not be wondering about it it for long.....You are, my sweetheart after all."

Frozen, her body's freedom taken away from her, Beatrice could do nothing to that voice but listen.

As those words were heard, speaking without trembling, as if in their shared memories there was no mistake. Slowly rising from his seat, and drawing nearer to her side, that person's eyes were dark, but any signs of discomfort could not

be found in them.

To get revenge, was that person's reason for finding this place, Beatrice had concluded. But the glint in that human's eyes, revenge, no matter how she thought it seemed far from the truth.

In those dark eyes filled with dim light, some feeling that was ripping at his chest could be found.

"Back then, you let me run away and, now I am still here. That, definitely, I wanted to tell you I've been thinking about that."

"That, this is your method for that.....You are really a nuisance of a man, I suppose.....Definitely, annoying."

"I am sorry about that. But, you had figured it out, Beatrice."

Interrupting Beatrice's words as she ground her teeth, he slowly shook his head.

Those lips, drawing in the shape of a smile, silently looked down at Beatrice.

If she thought about it, had she ever seen this person smile like this? Back then, when she had let him spend many hours staying in the Forbidden Library, during that time.

At that recalling Beatrice, he put out his hand, and said.

"———That you and I, we were the same kind, that is."

"———"

The corners of his eyes sagged, and now, his eyes became like they were again, really like how the boy was at first they returned.

Back to, during those few days at the mansion, back before becoming strange, he returned to that.

"At that time, I could only be resolved to die, but you could not give up on me, you rescued me. Even now how many times, how many times thoughts of that red-glowing sunrise comes to my thoughts."

"You are....."

"I am still thankful for that, Beatrice..... Why, back then, did you not kill me?"

"——Euh"

That was perhaps, thanks, or if not then words of resentment.

Regardless, watching that face mixed with both joy and sorrow saying those words, Beatrice was just surprised.

So this, was the work of her influence, their heart's all-consuming despair, she takes in.

As if naturally, that rigid hold on her body which made her uneasy came undone, and her outstretched arm dropped down. But, in this newfound freedom, her strength to resist was already gone.

Why, it had been returned, it was very easy to understand.

“Beatrice, I’m thankful for you. I think I probably did like you. Within that time, only you truly drew close to me, those are my thoughts.”

“.....That is, the lowest confession.”

“I agree.”

At his words, Beatrice replied with empty feelings.

And then, in that thinly smiling boy’s black eyes, Beatrice saw the truth. ——It was, those dark emotions within were so familiar to her, that was how she realized.

There was, in his chest having settled, that which after a while would consume all hope, such that it was essential to avoid it ever happening.

———A disease called despair, within him, within herself, had laid quietly nesting.

“Halibel, a sword.”

At that request, the wolf-man waiting by Beatrice raised his eyebrows.

Silently, looking on at those two’s questions and answers, it was that Wolf Human who now shook his kiseru up and down.

“.....Is that alright?”

“A sword.”

Repeatedly ordered, that wolf-man swung his left arm high.

Then, landing on the kitchen floor with a thud, a black lump of steel simply stuck there.

Letting off a dull gleam, this dark-colored metal. It had a simple form for cutting down life.

“The contract, that you remembered it, I was so happy.”

But even though you just wanted to use it, it was not that such a thought didn't occur to her.

But. That this was truly, to him, a distant joy that could not simply be overlooked, he spoke with that kind of voice. To blame him somehow, that feeling did not really appear in her.

“You are, with those colors that fit you well, very pretty you know.”

"———"

At that moment, Beatrice's eyes opened wide, and filled with heavy tears.

In her blurry sight, that person gently overlooking her was there. As she blinked, tears began to flow down cheeks. Shedding tears like that, to gaze at his appearance to the end was what she wished.

That guy, that she was the same type as himself, he had said that.

Then, there was definitely a reason, there was a reason he was here for her.

Back then, what she had done, that it had greatly affected his life she had not known.

That it had turned and turned and, had returned to her like this,

That they, for this Beatrice, was doing this, to free her——

“Are you, they?”

"———"

With a numbly stiff tongue, shivering and shaking, Beatrice spoke those words.

Those words that came out like a sigh, when heard by the boy standing right in front of her eyes, for that his movements slightly stopped.

I'm giving you the time. For bitter words, or whatever it may be, I would accept everything, that kind of resolve could be seen.

To that determination, Beatrice——

“——You are, Betty's, they , I suppose?”

That question's meaning, he would definitely not understand.

That there would be an answer, Beatrice wasn't even hoping for that much.

It was just, if her final end, if it was that which had come looking for her, she must try to hear it still.

“Aah.”

———So, at that smiling, agreeing appearance, at that Beatrice's mind was crushed and broken.

In that dear smile, in those kindly-spoken words, in that raised blade lay within a blessing.

“I, am your they. ”

Once more, big drops of tears, flowing over that girl’s reddened cheeks, ran down and fell.



Chapter 5

“A drowning man will even clutch at straws, there’s a proverb like that where I used to live~”

Facing down over a floor covered in red carpet, a man was listening to the voice.

That carpet, his face was very close to it.

And gazing down like that, his breathing was fast. The beat of his heart rang in his ears, and his body felt like he had just finished sprinting over distant fields.

He looked to be reaching sixty, an old man.

Having sired sons, likely even grandsons, he showed the marks of having lived a long and fitting life.

His position was such that, many people had to talk with him, and sometimes necessary to fight with some of them.

Having had a long and brilliant career, this man had been entrusted with much by those around him.

That he was special, he did not have any thoughts of bragging like that. But born with a wit beyond the norm, he had resolved to live a life of abundance.

And that was why, in this situation, he could not help but wonder whether he was in a dream or an illusion. He could not believe it.

——He was, down on his knees, in front of an opponent no older than his own grandchildren.

“Straw, do you know what that is? Probably there’s straw like I am thinking of here..... Like wheat, or something like that.

The one in the water is so desperate, that even knowing how useless it is, they will grab at nothing with all their might.. It’s that kind of feeling.”

“———”

“To put it plainly, dying humans will desperately try to survive no matter what, that is the meaning of the proverb. From their view, things may look different. They are still thinking of turning the tables on us, but to us it just looks like useless struggling.”

Smoothly, the voice above his head fluently speaks.

Of what is being said, most of it seems pointless, but not one word, not one phrase can be missed for fear of somehow raising his ire. Not when gruesome rumors about him are piled up like mountains.

That boy, who having emerged just two years ago, had been spoken of in cruel and horrific spreading rumors ever since.

All that opposed him, his family, and those important to him were pushed aside by any means necessary. With irresistible force he had kept expanding『Pleiades』resolutely as its head.

With terrifying success, he determined with vicious skill those that would not respect his power, and those people like this he called forth.

——『Purge King』, this boy was called.

“———”

The old man was kneeling in a place where, hidden in the shadow of the four great nations, started for the purpose of controlling their underworld society, this organization's headquarters lay.

Luxuriously drawn portraits, extravagantly decorated things were gathered in this room to the point of overflowing. It was that organization's reception hall.

The king was, on the room's throne—— What could rightly be called treasure, on that supreme throne seated upon and looking down on his guest.

It was a dazzling and luxurious setup, and the amount of gold used was enough to make one's head spin. The piled earnings from one man's life repeated a thousand, no, ten thousand times, would not touch the glare of wealth that assaulted one's gaze here and naturally caused it to fall, it was that kind of feeling.

That this was due to the organization's———No, the power of the king even idiots could understand with a glance. And even if someone incapable of getting had come here. That person, having entered this very room, would never be seeing the light of day again.

Simple displays of power, mere shows of wealth were not worth anything in comparison.

Lining the walls were dozens of men, all with names famous for being that of a top mercenary or soldier. All of this, it was possible to make them follow with money, but to actually have carried that out, just how much did cost?

Even if they only numbered a few dozen, to maintain this army, a vast amount of gold would be needed.

Then, among that crowd where only the best had been readied, that was not all. But that pair at the peak standing to the left and right of the throne, for the kneeling old man were more than enough to give him a strong sense of what kind of person was seated there.

———With presence beyond imagination, were『Admirer』Halibel, and『Blue Lightning』Cecilus Segmunt.

Of the Kararagi City States, and of the Holy Vollachia Empire.

In those two countries, each respectively holding the name of the strongest, those two were kept side by side. Abruptly appearing in this group, how that young boss' violent hold had gone uncontested, there was no better evidence than this.

“Sigrum-san?”

“———”

At that moment, his state of mind having gone dim, his name was called, that man——Sigrum's heart became frozen.

Looking on, resting his chin on his arm, the king, smile gone from his face, was gazing at Sigrum with dark eyes.

As if his heart was directly squeezed, Sigrum struggled.

Something, if excuses were not made soon, his oxygen-deprived lips shivered. However, at that Sigrum's fragile response, the Purge King's shoulders shrank.

“Ah—— for making you bored, I apologize. Having my stories get off-topic is a bad habit of mine, since long ago, and if I talk in this roundabout way we might never get to the point.”

“I, I am fine.....that, is”

“I am talking.”

“———”

With the right hand's finger held to his lips, the king's left hand was pointed at him.

A quiet point for him to make excuses suddenly blocked, his back became slick with cold sweat. In that silence which felt freezing to his body, ten long seconds passed,

“.....Sorry. I didn't mean to threaten you. It's just that, these two people here. And these others present are all hired by me and follow me, but you're not like that are you? So then, how should I say it..... I acted in a manner I was used to, sorry.”

“———”

In honest terms, the speaker's tone was quiet. That magnitude was odd and stuck out at him.

The Purge King was polite, and to that opposing side conveyed respect, and yet just like that without hesitation he would also carry out violence on them.

The king's tone in treating others with words, showed none of his hidden intentions to a listener. Embarrassed eyes lacking confidence, actually pierced through to peer at inner thoughts with narrowed gaze, with strong attention to the other's nerve in every move he was observing.

Those darkened black pupil asked only one question.

——Are you, my friend, or my enemy, I wonder.

“———”

Of course, that he was not an enemy, that he must assert.

However, Sigrum's words were sealed, having just been forbidden from talking back.

Making a sound, or responding with his eyes, showing with his attitude, would it wear on that guy's patience?

With such a fear capturing the elder's heart, the longest few seconds of his life felt like an eternity.

Something like this, exaggeratedly just laughing it off, not a single person had survived trying that.

The organization's stance was merciless, and in the center of those four nations' underworld, that group which in his hands had been steadily growing, already had become an irremovable sore.

To survive, was to avoid being entangled in that diseased portion in the first place, as overcoming that illness after the fact was impossible.

And so, the sole method of surviving. Offering complete submission in the name of coexistence, it was only that.

An incurable illness he had tried to avoid at all costs. But ultimately, unable to escape it, the old man had come to this place.

With all his answers already prepared beforehand, with determination having chosen to submit, it was for that he had come.

But, even that thought had been carelessly made, Sigrum had come to understand here.

Hands and feet tied, and tossed in the water while unable to move. Like that, he was out of breath, and his oxygen-deprived lips were struggling. On land, in

this room, he was drowning in that gaze.

“———”

Not a disease. But a curse.

The Purge King, this never-ending curse was what he was ruling over.

Fear to the point of making him sick blurred his eyes, and unending doubt gnawed away at his heart.

He was, that human was fearing. His opponent was fearing, was doubting, was hating.

That king himself had the strongest fear buried within him, and that with this same curse he was eating away at others, desperately all others that came across it were infected with the same.

Like drowning, the king had said first. It was just as he had said.

Now, if it seemed like a chance, Sigurum would try to grab at straws or at anything.

“So, umu..... So, the straw story. To live desperately will..... Umu, like that we know, Sigurum-san with us like this had this talk, because of an idea that was not well thought-out, you wanted to forcibly push that onto us with a desire for results.

“———”

Saying so that, the Purge King spread his left hand in their direction. And like yielding the turn to speak, an offering gesture of the hand was made.

“Ah”

At that moment, as if the stiffness had come unraveled, breath leaked out from Sigrum's lips.

At that single moment, grabbed by fear to avoid annoying the king's senses, in front of the eyes of that young man he did not react. That patient silence, he had directed Sigrum to, it was due to that.

"Sigrum-san?"

"Ah, no..... My apologies. As for my side's thoughts, it is stated in my sent letter. With all members of your organization, from now on and for a long time, we humbly wish for good relations."

With words chosen carefully, taking care to avoid showing excess humility, Sigrum expressed his position on the matter.

Hearing that, the Purge King narrowing his eyes, but after mulling it over for a while he smiled.

"____"

That smiling face, seeing it abruptly matching the age of its owner, Sigrum was surprised.

With that startled Sigrum, the king was strongly agreeing.

"Let us have a nice partnership, Sigram-san. The details will be discussed with the person in charge later on.. This was the best and wisest choice for you."

"Ah....."

“From now on, regarding this association, I will be in your care.”

His hand raised, while smiling the Purge King concluded the meeting.

At those words, Sigrum slowly lifted his body. His body had grown stiff from kneeling, and his body posture briefly faltered, but while enduring it with difficulty he let out a long breath.

“Thank you very much. From now on, this side will be in your care as well.”

“Umu.”

Somehow, holding his tongue, his final words concluded the talk.

And so, nodding like this was over, the noble bowed his head and stepped back away.

“———”

In his heart that was bouncing and shifting, a strong sense of relief and achievement was blowing like a storm.

His body that up to a few seconds ago had felt heavily weighted down, felt suddenly like floating. And with naturally lightened footsteps, the faces of his family members waiting for him to return home rose in his head one by one.

Having braved this violent wave, somehow his wish had been granted.

“———?”

It was at that time.

From the rear, a very faint sound was heard.

A sound familiar to the ear, the sound of a coin, it was that.

Something similar to, a single coin slipping from the hand, and hitting the floor..

“Tails.”

One short word, a voice was heard saying.

What that was, Sigrum’s mind wondered, racing crazily fast———,

“———”

The elder’s view tilted, becoming even with the floor.

Even more so than when he was kneeling, this carpet had grown suddenly closer.——When he felt that, it was the end.

Chapter 6

“———”

At that fallen man's throat-slit corpse, Halibel was gazing with narrowed eyes.

Praiseworthy skill.

That old man's corpse lacked stiffness in hands and feet, and the head that had fallen on the carpet had failed to read the mood. The corpse was like a corpse that had lost only its life, only that, and it was because of this that it could be called an artfully made corpse.

But the corpse was nothing but a corpse, and to see it as amazing, to judge it that way, was not a hobby he indulged in himself.

"Oh, OuuehEh."

Watching the sight of the bleeding corpse, the boy on the throne held his mouth firmly closed.

Already, he had seen the moment where a person becomes a corpse many times, but as his temperament was sensitive, he showed no sign of really getting used to it.

“After having ordered it, acting like that towards the dead, isn't that definitely insulting? To become used to corpses, I wouldn't ask for that, but maybe you should at least to aspire to avoid creating them, how about that?”

“I too, am not killing for enjoyment This. Not even being able to look

straight at it, but being at such a scene anyway, but more than that..”

"That's being deceitful."

At his employer holding a handkerchief in front of his mouth, fighting off nausea, his colleague's words to him held no absolution.

Of course, the side that was in the right was— The side of Cecilus. That his employer did not show fury at this was evidence he knew his actions had the marks of deception.

While looking at the young boy whose face had grown as pale as the corpse's, Cecilus, with an offhand “Anyhow”, continues to speak. His gaze was still watching the corpse, that poor fallen old man.

“That contradiction of yours does seem weird to me,” he said, “such a calm conversation ending with a sudden order to kill, you surprised me, boss. I would expect you to feel some remorse.”

While speaking as such, Cecilus with dissatisfaction puffed up his cheeks. It was not quite appropriate behavior for a man in his twenties, but his mind and appearance went together well, so it fit him.

His human sort of beauty, as usual was what allowing this conduct to occur.

Anyway, as Cecilus pointed it out, the boy also contorted his cheek,

"And so, didn't I tell you, I did not want to have him killed. Like I said to him, I wanted to believe it. A lying face or something like that, I didn't see it, either."

"Then, why?"

“Even if does not seem like they're lying, liars will lie after all.”

At that Cecilus gazing at him with surprise on his face, the boy that knelt on the throne bit his lip.

In that terribly skinny life, an unshakably strong will could be seen.

Halibel and Cecilus, what had happened in his past they did not know.

But, in that guy's past, they both believed that situation must have happened.

Smiling, and acting friendly, someone must have stacked doubt and hurt in his chest, with fingers that treated kindly, with lips they must have had spit out hatred and malice, that kind of experience.

Such a past, must have taught this boy.

"First cut the buds, then break apart the branches. I will never be fooled twice."

Tightly, the boy grabbed his own shoulder and pressed his fingernails over his collar. Those nails could be seen ruthlessly entering, skin was being torn, that blood is oozing was certain. That was, to him, a necessary ritual to maintain himself, those subordinates that had been with him long knew, and so nobody could stop it.

As if soon satisfied with the pain, the boy slowly rose from the throne,

"The corpse, make it neat and bury it. And, an envoy is to be sent to their shop. Everything is to be confiscated, but if they follow along do not treat them poorly. If they refuse, then purge the family and burn the store. When the takeover ends, have them greet the next one in charge and follow their plan. With that, it will be decided whether to destroy them or not."

With a calm tone, the boy ordered so those in the room could hear him.

For anyone, and not only that, but also to anyone, this is a bold order to make.

These requests that did not worry about the process, but rather only with the result, made the group work nicely. By focusing on the accomplishments of the group, not that of any one person, the perfect strength of the organization could be maintained.

And so, if someone taking a chance brought about failure, the risk of everything being lost was lowered, and with everyone's power the work was carried out. —It was the ideal workplace environment.

—As an example family, a lover, wealth, life, many other things.

Holding onto the safety of those things as insurance was the work of the boy.

And so the "Purge King", as he was called and feared as, this was that timid boy's way of fighting.

"Boss, you forgot your coat."

"Ah, thank you."

Standing, behind that boy heading to the doorway, Halibel gently draped a black coat over his shoulders.

Just slightly draping that on his shoulders, he also added a word of reminder—Immediately after that Halibel's whiskers grew numb with detected killing intent. At its intensity, Halibel lowered his eyes.

The source of that intent, he did not have to check, it was the boy in front of his sight.

Probably, it was because he had stood behind him.

“.....Halibel-san, I do not want to kill you.”

“Hahaha, then you can just not kill me. Instead just use me well.”

“But, being unable to control a tool and destroying yourself with it, is that not the worst-case.....”

Mumbling to himself, pondering on methods to kill the aide in front of him, the boy put on his jacket.

Those grumbling words were quickly brushed off, but the boy's words were not a joke.

He would, if it was possible, try to kill Halibel.

It was simply that, the effort it took to kill, the insufficiency of his preparation to kill, and the trouble brought about after the killing, it was merely that which had inclined him towards not killing, that was all.

“Boss, boss. These offerings that person brought, where should they be moved to?”

“Offered goods..... The contents, what were they?”

“Contents were.....Ah, there's a magic stone. From where did they learn of boss's tastes, they had come having paid that much regard, truly, I feel even more sorry for them.”

“Cutting off his head was Cecilus's idea so.....”

At the room's entrance, the boy who was called out twists his cheeks. And at that breezy attitude of Cecilus, he sighed.

"The magic stone, I'll ask you to send it my room. Other than that do with them as all of you like."

"Yes, yes, definitely understood. And, boss."

".....What is it."

That boss who was making unhappy sounds, at that boy Cecilus touches a finger to his eye.

"Those dark circles, are quite severe. Maybe, you should sleep softly next to the princess for a while?"

At Cecilus' words, the boy's tongue let loose with annoyed sounds. That Cecilus just laughed off, but around him those other men froze with tension in their bodies. It was possible that, because of that annoyance, Cecilus's slaying could be ordered to be carried out.

Of course, in that situation killing Cecilus would not be enough. Using every power available in the building, somehow they would have to try to force a draw with Halibel as well.

"——I will think about it."

Fortunately, the boy did not hastily order this, but with just those words turned away.

With that, relief spread throughout the room, and the men watched the back

of the departing boss. That waving Cecilus' inability to read the mood, was recently one of Halibel's biggest concerns.

"I too, taking on this kind of group is not really something I have confidence in it....."

Shaking the kiseru held in his mouth up and down, Halibel gazed at that boy's departing figure.

Firstly, as the most senior associate, guarding and similar duties were handled by Halibel. However, whether inside or outside the mansion, threats meaning to cause him harm were few.

Some were stopped by fear, and many others were simply unaware of his existence.

"———"

Carefully, Halibel watched over that boy who evaluated everything with narrowed eyes.

In that building, it was not just the reception room which was decorated with various works of arts and paintings. To maintain that glaring wealth, his whole body was being used to defend it.

By showing the authority of this wealth, and showing it off, creating unnecessary enemies could be avoided, that was the intended plan.

I win without fighting, the boy had said, but it could definitely be called strange.

Of course, as it is, an overpowering wealth and power was subject to the jealousy and envy of others. Ultimately, whatever you do enemies would appear. The boy's method then was simply to reduce the number of them.

And, if that quantity was reduced, it would only be necessary to deal with the rest using force later.

“Halibel-san.....Appropriately, please watch over Cecilus to keep him from exploding.”

“Understood, leave it to me, boss should go see the princess.”

“Alright.”

That he had accepted Cecilus’ suggestion perhaps annoying him, the boy replied with distended cheeks.

And then, those two pairs of legs headed deeper within——In the deepest part of the building named『Pandemonium』, they arrived at the door to the most strictly guarded room.

———On that door, there were so many locks that a person that is seeing it for the first time might shudder, there were with that many keys and a lot of locks were locked.

The amount of keyholes neared fifty, clearly showing the importance of what lay on the other side of this door, as well as the meticulous, tenacious, and obsessed nature of the person that had prepared it.

But, above all, what made the caretaker’s obsession most obvious was the fact that, the keys to fit in those keyholes and open the door, not one of them existed in this world.

That is, this door, by any normal method could never have been opened.

To open it, then——,

“———Puck.”

“I am called, and so I’m appeari— nyanyanyan.”

Receiving the boy’s call, with an exhausting voice and excessive flashes of light, a grey-furred kitten suddenly appeared in the air.

Outwardly with a silly attitude and cute appearance, but within holding absolute power, that great spirit———The existence known as Puck, floated down and landed on the boy’s shoulder.

“Yo, you’re here again after quite a while, is Lia the reason you came?”

“The door, open it.”

“Mmh, what is that, that tone is, if you spoil the father’s mood he might not let you see his daughter you know, the feelings of a father having a daughter at such a ripe age, if you could understand that more it would make me happy..”

“Puck.”

On top of his shoulder, Puck was stroking his whiskers.. The boy called to him.

Seeing that boy’s face marked with deep dark circles, Puck said something like “Ara-ara”, and like that he let out a sigh.

“You endured it until you're left anxiously shaking like this again, so it can’t be

helped. That effort of yours is commendable, so I'll let it slide just this once."

Saying that, with a satisfied air Puck gathered his short arms together and pointed towards the door. And, through those keyholes that lacked any keys, a faint light poured forth.

Click—

Soon after, the faint lights turned into keys made of ice, and fitting inside the door played an opening song.

The method to open a door that would not open—— The secret was to create a key that did not exist.

"Well poking at that blind spot, the idea that if there is a keyhole, then one must find a key that matches it, is usually the way. But if someone else tries to imitate this, it would become a difficult matter for them."

"There's also a magic spell there, so if someone other than me tried something similar, immediately that news would get to you and me both, and then I would definitely be there with Lia."

"That's right."

At Puck's words, Halibel came to understand and agreed.

Without even paying attention to that answer, the boy placed his hand on the opened door and paused. At his back, with a face feigning innocence stood Halibel. He gazed up at that face.

"Halibel-san, you can go now."

“Is that so? But, I too should greet the princess sometimes, don’t you think.....?”

“You can go now.”

Those words said without much thought, were flatly rejected.

Halibel certainly accepted that it was a definite refusal. This wasn’t something worth biting down and refusing to budge on, so Halibel chewed on his kiseru and backed off.

“If anything happens, it is ok to call on me.”

“———”

That boy was giving him a warning look with his hand still on the door. Halibel turned his back on him.

Until he turned the corner, and could no longer be seen, that boy’s sight was piercing into his back.

Always with such vigilance, rather than full of caution he was more fearful as a person. That was his boss.

“Ah, if I said it like that, he will definitely not call out for me then.”

With such listless mumbling, Halibel spewed smoke from his pipe while looking overhead.

Smoke hit the ceiling, and with nowhere to go, scattered.

———That it was somehow, a portent of their future, was the thought that came to his mind.



Chapter 7



As if he had died, that boy's sleeping face was quiet.

“———”

Entrusting his head to her knees, sleeping as if on the brink of death, it was that boy who Emilia gazed at.

Around his brows, there were dark circles that looked as if painted on with soot. Caused by and revealing the boy's serious level of sleep deprivation, it could only be this kind of situation.

“Oh, it looks like he hasn't been sleeping again.”

“It can't be helped, in his position he has no room to feel relaxed, most likely. Except for when every now and then, he can come see Lia and act like a baby.”

She stroked his forehead, and organized his lashes with her fingertips.

Watching that sleeping face made free by Emilia, the floating Puck wrapped his long tail around his stomach and sighed. Just like that he spun around her and examined her private room.



It was a white room.

White walls, white floors, a white ceiling, a white bed, white furniture and white curtains, everything in the room was united with whiteness.

Lying in the middle of that, Emilia was draped in thin sleepwear that was also white, so it was almost pathological.

This room, was the extent of Emilia’s given freedom——Locked in, to call it being locked in a cage, whether to put it like that, Emilia was still unsure

“Even now, Lia still isn’t angry at this child?”

“.....That, I wonder.”

At Puck’s question, Emilia hesitated in answering.

It was not that it was hard to say it. She was just not sure about her own feelings.

Well, at first she had definitely been angry, but even now they had not yet made up.

To apologize to each other, they did not even have time for that. Without solving that problem, time had simply passed, and daily life had merely continued on..

“But, I am feeling upset, at Puck. While keeping it a secret from me, to plan for leaving by yourself.”

“Sorry. But it could not be helped. There was no way to entrust you to a Roswaal in that state, right? It was a dangerous situation and place, and when dragging you away was possible, it would be irresponsible if I didn’t do that. If it is for Lia’s safety, here we’ll Pica -go.”

“———”

“To avoid letting Lia stay in danger, that boy and I were of the same mind.”

So Puck, in the plan to lead Emilia out of Roswaal’s mansion, had not hesitated in supporting that organization.

And with only Emilia unaware of anything, when she had finally realized she found herself in this white room, a bird caught in a cage———.

But, that she had no right to criticize Puck’s judgment, Emilia also understood.

“Because, in the end, I couldn’t do anything.....”

Luginica Kingdom’s struggle to choose its next ruler——In that fight, no matter how you look at it, Emilia had suffered a beyond-miserable defeat.

The biggest cause was, her refusing to attend the meeting of succession candidates. As a result, her participation in the selection had not been recognized. That meant that Emilia's sponsor Roswaal L. Mathers and her both fell in position.

In short, Emilia hadn't even appeared at the candidacy meeting and, her sponsor Roswaal had lost that ability as a result. The Emilia camp had broken at its first obstacle.

And so, Emilia who had stepped onto the first rung of the ladder, had been a failure who couldn't do anything.

“.....My, wish.”

Was to create a world without discrimination.

Whether half-elf or otherwise, a place where birth would not be the judge of a person's life, creating a place like that was clumsy Emilia's wish.

However, without even being given the chance to be spoken aloud, that wish had disappeared like a dream's fantasy.

And the end of that wish, the freeing of Emilia's hometown—— The work of rescuing Elnor Forest's still-asleep residents frozen in ice, that too she been unable to do.

“Like that, living in an unprotected building, it would be better to return to the forest, but Lia was in a situation where you couldn't even do that. Ah, so when the first envoy came I was definitely surprised.”

“.....Realllly, surprised. I will say that.”

The boy she had come here and met, Emilia had believed was dead.

The succession meeting's no-show, her fate had been decided, by that mansion boy's death.

In the witchfiends' attack the first casualty had been a girl. In that girl's death he had been suspected, the boy who had briefly been working at the mansion.

That suspicion, the boy could not endure and ran away. After him that Rem's older sister Ram had chased— —and had not returned.

The collapse, probably started from there.

The cause of Rem's death was discovered to be the curse of a shaman afterwards, and the damage to the nearby village growing had already combined into an unrecoverable situation.

Having accepted the result of the attack, Roswaal failed to take the opportunity to recover and met his downfall. Emilia failed to secure her participation in the selection, and brought from that failure undeniable humiliation. The mansion had fallen into a bad state, a bad state that nobody would have wished for, it had continued to decline in that direction.

It was then.

Swept away by the helplessness of being unable to do anything, Emilia was spending her days listlessly. But one day, a definitely disappeared boy had come to get her.

“———”

Puck had quickly responded to that. But Emilia was feeling angry at that boy.

Without caring about her feelings, without any explanation, not when first disappearing, not even when he returned, not saying anything, suddenly taking her away like this.

The world surrounding Emilia starting to collapse, he might even have been the cause.

Still———

“Like that.....”

To the reunited Emilia, the boy with a frail face exhausted from fear had, latched on even worse than now, cried, and begged her for help.

And at that boy bawling like a baby, Emilia had forgotten to be angry.

Maybe she was weak. Maybe she was easy.

And, even then, that boy who seemed like a child, who had fallen asleep with a baby-like face. To be able to scold him, Emilia did not think her position was enough.

So, the boy had found Emilia, to find himself salvation.

He came looking for her. Not saying a single word about what he was doing outside her room's door, just sobbing sadly and talking about his own feelings, on Emilia's knees he entrusted to her his life.

Whether it was receiving strong trust, or truthfully being looked down upon and being humiliated, that depended on what Emilia thought. And Emilia was not able to give any answer to that.

“Obviously, this is reaalllly not healthy.....”

That this was, not a normal state to be in, even the immature Emilia realized that.

But, Emilia, while accepting that clinging boy's tears, looking on the form of the boy for a moment letting himself rest, in her own inner thoughts she was unsure.

“———”

Speaking of the intervals in which the boy sought Emilia, it was about once every ten days.

Other than then, even cutting back on sleep-time, he was desperately struggling.

Really, we do not speak together much.

But, at that boy who secretly came searching for her once every ten days, Emilia,

“.....Subaru, you baka.”

———That perhaps, she longed for those visits, Emilia had grown aware of that.

Chapter 8

———If a tossed gold coin landed on tails, with just that anyone was killed.

At that strange master's way, Frederica could not hide her disgust.

Cleaning a headless corpse from the reception, Frederica changed out dirty rugs, and prepared food for『Pandemonium』's mercenaries.

“The fates of others, quite literally left to luck..... Do you feel like you've become a god?”

Lifting the whole body of a corpse, Frederica, knowing all too well the reason for her helplessness, she bit down hard with sharp fangs, and trembling with anger held her feelings inside.

Frederica Baumann was employed and working there in the organization because, that organization head 『Purge King』's princess———Emilia had strongly begged on her behalf.

That day, as the mansion filled with chilled air and frost, she felt convinced she was going to lose her life to the great spirit that had betrayed her, but for some reason she had woken up here.

And so, with a collar clasped around her neck, she now offered up her body and worked as a maid for that detestable person.

Just how, how clumsily had she worked that she was afflicted with this kind of unreasonable job?

“——Master, pardon me, please.”

Her owner's own meals, it was the rule that Frederica would carry it to his room directly.

Other than Frederica, he did not entrust this task to anyone else, and food cooked by any other than her, he would not put in his mouth. That this was some honorable thing, she had no feeling like that whatsoever.

Firstly, it was not because of taste or trust that Frederica had been entrusted with the task. Merely that Frederica would not try stupid things, that kind of

conviction she would not hold.

“Come.”

With the sound of many locks coming undone, a rude order allowed her entry.

Following her orders, with the food cart in tow, Frederica stepped foot into the room of her master.

Her master’s room, unlike the luxurious decor and interior of the building, was big, but quite simple and a dull secret room lacking in humanity.

The room’s four corners held many books that were not distinguished by subject. Messily piled up books were stacked everywhere, and it was a place the orderly Frederica could not bear. But, having his room cleaned, that person deeply hated it.

Perhaps he was, being wary of something being installed in the room

Knowing that was impossible, but still being on the lookout for it, was not being cautious but rather cowardly— —Definitely, it was contemptible behavior.

“Master, should something be done about these fallen documents?”

“.....Umu. Ah, please do. Find some guy that looks like he would know, you can just show them.”

That being said, what was being waved away by her uninterested master, littering the floor, were a few sentences written down in messy handwriting.

At first glance, they simply seemed to be discarded, messed-up drafts, but in fact they were the source of the organization’s wealth— —And the Purge King’s creations of mysterious opportunities.

“That much, might not be very helpful.....Engines or things like that, I don’t get the structure at all. As expected, different kinds of food are the easiest to figure out.....”

Mumbling complaints, looking somewhere other than here was her owner.

What he was talking about. Were, never before seen, nor discovered knowledge, culture, leads for those, or possibilities.

Meeting lots of people, that black-haired boy had repeatedly made great decisions———Like he was marked by fate, he had many unique ideas, and as a pioneer of culture had been granted cleverness.

Those many pieces of knowledge he spoke of, with those wise men asleep in their fields of study had been lit with a new flame.

Possibilities which normal people could not understand, in one breath appeared in that boy's joking words, and the wise ones uncompromisingly tested and debated and finally established them into theories.

And so, with that producing enormous profits, the boy who had nothing had been nurtured into a great villain.

“Having come this far, calling it a template made of future knowledge isn't even funny.”

Before, those achievements had been praised, but he had mumbled such strange words in reply, Frederica knew. When she had mentioned it, he had not laughed at all.

And so, on one hand causing many people to suffer, on the other giving rise to much happiness, it was one part of her dark-haired master that was not cruel.

Even as a problematic existence that humanity should remedy, in his brain there was definite value.

This, unreachable being. Was definitely one-of-a kind in this world, there was no doubt——Maybe in that sense, he might have had something in common with Roswaal.

“———”

“Frederica, the food. First, have a bite.”

Even while preoccupied in her thoughts, Frederica was steadily readying the meal to be served.

This boy was, only skin and bones, skeletal in appearance. It was not that his portions were lacking, the issue was largely mental.

Having given and taken many wounds, while living comfortably he was comparably quite skinny in appearance. As the manager of his meals, it did not

make her feel great, but he probably wasn't vomiting because he wanted to.

"Master, with this."

Why had meals been prepared for two?

All menus were for two, placed on large plates, and on the table were set. And from every plate's meal Frederica ate a single bite. To even check for the presence of poison was one of her roles.

She had never added any. But "I want to", she had thought that before.

It was just, for Frederica, the work of a maid had taken up much of her life, and it was precious to her. The people that taught her, and those involved with her, when thinking of them she did not want to commit acts of violence.

"Then, I will be outside, if there is anything please call for me."

"Umu."

During meals, her master did not enjoy being seen.

Because of that, having finished with readying the meal, Frederica felt it was time to leave, and was withdrawing from the room.

Spread out over the desk were, a written list with the organization's members. Next to that list, a gold coin left there could be seen.

At that moment, having realized the meaning of that, Frederica could not hide the fear running down her back.

"Master——"

"Frederica."

Looking back, at that Frederica who had called her master, empty black eyes were gazing at her.

In that empty darkness, Frederica swallowed. In front of her, her master slowly approached the desk and covered that unfolded list.

And then, flipping the gold coin just next to it with a thumb,

"——Heads."

With a carefree noise, that tossed coin fell into the boy's left hand. Catching

it, and having checked the side which was facing up, that boy smiled at Frederica.

“It was heads, Frederica.—Your little brother and grandmother are safe.”

“—Ah”



“Get out, and don’t come back until I say you may enter.”

At her owner’s words, Frederica nodded like a doll without speaking.

And so, unable to hide her eyes welling up, wetting her cheeks with hot tears she left the room. Soon after, Frederica while covering her face began to run.

“Wa, waaa..... waah! ”

She could not tell, not anyone, not anything. Sharing would not be forgiven.

How, had it become like this?

Why, did this happen to her?

Those days at the mansion, with those not cute at all kouhais, those cute kouhais, that troublesome master having spent long ago——Where had those times gone?

Chapter 9

———Having received word from a courier, Cecilus closed one eye and looked up at the moon.

“Hmmm, hmhmm, hmhmm-hhmm”

There twisting his neck, bending at the waist, low enough that the tips of his long hair might brush the ground, he tilted his form.

By nature, he was not confident in his thinking ability. Cecilus had not received formal education, and had lived with no intention of learning things in the first place. In years, his life numbered around twenty, but he had spent it all on one thing only.

Only, with pride in his swordsmanship, on years of swinging a sword.

Since it was a life of only that, in his heart of hearts he hated difficult matters.

“Then, how should I do this, if it’s me..”

Straightening his bent body, Cecilus shook the dust from his hair that had been touching the floor. And at his waist’s katana he placed a hand on and looked back as if dancing.

“Hey, Halibel-san, what do you think?”

“———Your stupidity, if you’re so proud of it, that me who kept silent becomes embarrassed.”

The castle———Pandemonium’s balcony, underneath the light of the moon with the sky overhead, from a few shadows a beast-like ninja appeared.

Having been detected, Halibel scratched his head, and at that undaunted Cecilus’ face approached.

Pulling his pipe from his pocket, biting down on it, lighting it and puffing in smoke, he exhaled.

“Back then, who was it that used it?”

“This?——I used to be one of the『Nine God Generals』.....Well, if I was caught by the strongest ninja Halibel, it can’t be helped.”

“Ceci-san, for things like secret missions, you’re not a fitting person at all. Isn’t it Ceci-san that has just revealed to me that he never broke off ties with the Vollachia Empire?”

“But that, Halibel-san, weren’t you already aware?”

“———”

Halibel with an awkward grin, at Cecilus’ comment smiled even deeper.

That this was not a negative sign, Cecilus was frankly aware of it.

“Originally, working with the boss was His Excellency’s order. Of course, that I fell for the boss’s invitation and came to this side isn’t a lie.”

“With the Empire’s collar around your neck....Well, Ceci-san’s movements, if used well, it would be easier to change things to the Empire’s profit. That knowledge from somewhere unknown, rather than Luginica and Gusteko, it would be more easily adapted in Karagagi and Vollachia.”

“That’s right, yes.”

Drawing his hand into his kimono sleeves, Cecilus acknowledged that he was a spy.

Cecilus’ reason for working under the plan of the organization was, as he said, following the orders of Vollachia’s Emperor.

Even saying that, the Emperor, knowing Cecilus’ temperament, had not given specific instructions. Not that he could have remembered them.

It was just, the role of Cecilus as commanded———,

“Other than His Excellency, all I have to do is kill who the boss orders be killed, too. So it’s just the usual.”

“Ce-san, aren’t you even more like an assassin than myself who is a ninja?”

“No, no, definitely I can’t do that much, I mean, stuff like lurking in the water, or hiding poison on my person, or rising from the shadows is impossible for me.”

Shaking his head and hands, Cecilus humbly responded by acknowledging the difference between their respective areas. As a ninja, as an assassin, he was far

behind Halibel. But, if fighting head-on, Halibel could not reach his ability.

“Well then, having just been caught at the scene meeting with a courier, what are you thinking of doing? Here, with me, are you planning on fighting with your life on the line?”

“That, depends on what the missive says inside.”

“Hmm, you mean its contents.”

“If that, its contents would kill Su-san, to stop that I guess I’ll have to fight.

Holding his kiseru between his fingers, letting out a cloud of smoke, Halibel’s fur fluttered in the cold night air.

Vaguely, hearing he was ready to fight to the death for his master, Cecilus with an “Indeed.” nodded his head.

“I was wondering from the start, but why is Halibel-san acting for the boss? It’s not out of sincerely loyalty to His Excellency like me.”

“To repay the grace I received.”

“———. From that person, in what situation was it that Halibel-san received kindness?”

With his words rushing out, Cecilus asked with sincere surprise. Depending on the person, this was brazen enough to be considered rude, but Halibel did not say anything in particular.

Instead, Halibel gazed up at the moon hanging in the night sky——,

“About when I first met Su-san, in a corner of Kararagi there was a bit of an incident. That was just, a situation tangled up with the Four Great Spirits.....Su-san calmed that down for me.”

“Heeh, the Four Great Spirits! They I did already know about, but my words didn’t really get through to them, ara. To calm that situation down..... Ara, boss is stronger than I thought.....”

“That is wrong, it wasn’t such an aggressive situation like that. I don’t know if it was by some decisive measure. But rather.....Like how sometimes Su-san shows us some strange predictions, it was like that.”

His blade turned, Cecilus with one eye closed listened to Halibel's explanation.

Subtly left to ponder whether it was possible or whether it was impossible, this atmosphere was because in some ways Cecilus was occupied with evaluating his boss.

Halibel had called it a strange prediction, but Cecilus did not look at it like that.

That was, to prepare for anything was the weapon of a coward, he thought. And, Cecilus thought it was desirable to respect the strong.

That was, no matter what method of fighting, one who would greedily use anything to win he acknowledged as a warrior.

"Well, as a strong one among swordsmen, if possible, sticking with a sword fits me the best."

"Ce-san, Ce-san, my story, did you get it?"

"Yes, that is enough. Anyway, it wasn't that I thought of suspecting Halibel-san or anything like that. Unlike empires, city-states at the head are all knotted up together.....More than moving around at everyone's intent like that, it's a lot more reliable."

That said, Halibel seemed worn out and disappointed. At that Cecilus tilted his head, and with a "Ah," as if forgetting something, clapped his hands together.

"Right, right, I was forgetting. The contact that came from the courier a while ago."

"That, is it okay to tell me?"

"If I don't tell you, I think that would cause a lot of difficulties."

There, with a smile Cecilus told Halibel.

"———The Margrave's murder has surfaced, so the kingdom is sincerely rushing to destroy the organization."

Chapter 10

———This calmly, at the last moment visiting.

“Being able to meet you today, it is surely a great honor.”

Saying this, welcomed as a guest to the reception area. this youth confronted the『Purge King』.

“———”

Slaying much, erasing many lives, trying to grasp many weaknesses was this person.

Meeting that, to maintain calm, to bluff with a pretend performance, there were many situations like that.

“———Somehow, your confidence is remarkable, though you do not seem much different from me in age.”

“———. So suddenly, are those words of praise sent.”

His head bowed, wearing a black suit and tie was a thinly built young man.

There was a mild look on his face, but in his eyes somehow a wicked darkness could be seen.

That smile he was making was likely fake, and that it would be seen through he was definitely aware.

Not irresponsible, but full of courage.———Was this young man with a mixed-up demeanor.

“Saying that, you definitely”

“In truth, not far off from now, we intend to do much large-scale business here. Because of that, we had been looking for a chance to first meet the head of the organization and present gifts.”

“Though, whatever happens with that doesn’t matter to me.”

Unhesitantly, that posture of advancing along his role left a good impression.

Receiving that sort of attitude, the boy also calmly began with the work.

“The royal offerings from our side——— The head, we have heard desired this.”

“Hoh.”

The young man’s readied offering, as its carrier presented and opened up its lid, gazes would be pulled towards it. There lay a massive stone———Containing within a magic crystal, and as if affirming its purity, the mana which filled the room grew even a step thicker.

That offering, the king was watching, the Purge King was muttering.

”What color is it?”

“———?”

“Crimson and azure shades seem to abound, but on the inside gold and vermilion are comparatively in abundanceAs expected, my perception is keen.”

At that question with unknown meaning, the young man showed hesitation for the first time.

Instead of that boy, it was Cecilus who had replied, standing next to the king. After having received that Cecilus’ report, the king was magnificently nodding.

“That is so, with thanks I will be receiving your consideration, and.....”

“Russell Fellow’s gesture.”

“Umu, understood. Russell Fellow, is it, if any difficult situations crop up.....”

At that, the Purge King cut off his words.

The reason was that lion-like young man, to stop him from speaking had spread out his hand.

In that instant, the atmosphere of the room came to buzz. Having interrupted the king’s speech, what response will the Purge King give to that action, the guards wondered energetically.

However, in the center of that Halibel and Cecilus, and only that young man coldly, “Please wait. In truth, the offerings, just this is not all of it.”

“———Hooh, then I am even more, delighted.”

After listening to that man’s words, the king responded as such, and the guards’ tensions relaxed slightly.

There, in that atmosphere which was starting to relax, that young man was nodding his head.

And so———,

“———From the Luginica Kingdom, regarding the Purge King’s atrocities, it could be called the response.”

Immediately, an onslaught of white light swallowed up the whole room, and shattered.

An incredibly bright kind of light, in that luxurious reception of the magic base『Pandemonium』, as if purifying it, into a white line it was changing.

In that total confusion, perishing from that were eighteen———Each confident in their abilities, with names known throughout, but this was a different sort of case.

Even if, to those vanquished men, the truth of what happened could somehow be told, there were none among them who would have believed it.

———The blow which has vaporized them all, was with a single slash been brought about.

Breaking apart, the organization’s base.

The place where important things gathered were blown away by that reigning brilliant existence.

In much evil acts having dyed his hands, and now finally having been acknowledged as the enemy of the world,『Purge King』.

To subjugate that existence, the Dragon Kingdom having sent, was none other than———, “———Of the line of Sword Saints, Reinhard van Astrea.”

One who made every effort against them useless, that absurdly godlike

weapon, had appeared here.

Chapter 11

In that destroyed parlor, a leisurely man was standing.

Fiery crimson hair, blue eyes that mimic the sky, that white knight uniform leaving not a single stain, a knight among knights, that forceful kind of presence was standing.

In that knight's hand, the sword which was held shattered into innumerable pieces.

With just one blow, that weapon crafted by a swordsmith who had left his name upon the world simply turned to dust. To compensate for that, having repeatedly carried out a myriad of wonders, he was now cracking down on ———,

“———You're not a cute opponent at all, you know that, right?

“———”

Like a peal of thunder breaking through the smoke, that sword strike closed in on Reinhard.

And so, with an impact like thunder indeed ringing out, the one called 『Blue Lightning』 was thrown back. But that blow was not received by the body.———That katana, the knight had blocked with his sheathe.

Not with hands, but by twisting his body to take the strike with the sheathe, with that acrobatic maneuver having also blown back that young man. ———At that Cecilus let out a whistle.

“Seriously, that really isn't human at all..... This makes me so happy, Reinhard-san!”

“But for me, I don't think I will feel very pleased about our reunion, Cecilus-kun.”

Kicking up from a floor billowing with dust, his drawn katana Murasame draped on his shoulder was Cecilus. At that single blow in lieu of greeting, Reinhard furrowed his brow.

Then, from within that smoke-fading room,

“.....Didn’t reach, huh.”

“Ah, that did not seem to have reached the boss. Well, where Halibel and I are guarding, that’s a hard place to get to. But. to be honest, I didn’t particularly move while thinking of protecting the boss, so Halibel-san’s achievement is a 10.”

Saying that, in the inner room where Cecilus was innocently pointing with his chin———At the throne shrouded in smoke leaning was the『Purge King』, and from behind wrapping around, Halibel’s appearance was there.

That Halibel, puffing smoke from the kiseru held in his mouth———

“Ce-san, you are not quite correct. This is not merely my achievement.”

“Eh! Surely not, my hidden power.....”

“Even that isn’t it. This is, Su-san’s work.....This throne, definitely with some strange great power is being protected. Though, we haven’t ever heard of it.”

At that Cecilus who was gazing down at his hand while trembling, Halibel shook his head.

Then, at the rear of that Halibel, the『Purge King』who had been seated on the throne rose. And, grabbing at the scarlet scarf that he wore around his neck,

“———I saw your strike before at the loot house, having prepared for that is only natural.”

Twisting his cheeks, he gave a very grim smile.

This was none other than,『Purge King』——— No, this was Natsuki Subaru and Reinhard meeting once again.

“Subaru.....!”

“You really drew a poor lot, Reinhard. If you hadn’t helped me back at the loot house, it would not have become like this now——— But in that case, you would never have been able to meet your precious mistress, you’d say something like that, wouldn’t you?”

“—Euh.”

Peeping out from Halibel's side, Subaru stuck his tongue out at Reinhard.

At that wicked form, Reinhard's cheeks stiffened as if he was in pain. Swaying sadly, those blue eyes gazed ahead at the Subaru making that devilish and hateful face.

But suddenly, that expression disappeared.

"——What is that, you're definitely black and white too?"

"——? Black and white? Is that....."

"Shut up, you lying bastard.——Then, there's no way I can just die for you."

With emotionless words, Subaru turned away his eyes that had lost interest from Reinhard. And like that, whacking Halibel on the shoulder, gazing on at Cecilus as he continued to confront Reinhard,

"Cecilus, you can do what you want. I've already lost interest."

"———. I don't understand much about that, it seems the boss and I are looking at different things. But I will just receive your words with thanks."

"What we're seeing is different..... Ha ha, that's obvious. Even at the end you make me laugh."

As if something about Cecilus' words were funny, Subaru slapped his knee with amusement. Then, his smile disappearing immediately,

"It was enjoyable in its own way. Cecilus, since you had no weaknesses, I struggled."

"For me it's only that.——Mayonnaise is scary."

"Ku-hah!"

At that cheekily asserting Cecilus, Subaru laughed as if he was pleased.

That Subaru's appearance, held in Halibel's arms, into a shadow sank. And like that Subaru and Halibel, those two from their predicament departed.

"Wait! Our talk isn't yet....."

"———That was the end,『Sword Saint』. If you don't want it to stop there,

then please catch up and start over. But before then, this『Purge King』's faithful subordinate will be blocking your way.”

“Ku.....Euh.”

Trying to chase after that vanished Subaru, Reinhard felt something brushing by beneath his feet.

Sundering the floor in a straight line, that blow, without a moment visible of that katana being drawn, an overwhelming sword creating a single strike, that was one only wielded by who had reached the peak of the way of the sword.

“Regrettably, it’s still too early for me to be judged like that. I am still in the middle of climbing. Walking forward, if I can overcome I think I can reach it.”

“Reach, where?”

“Of course, the heavenly sword.”

At that moment, with a sound like the air freezing, like it was being cut and dying could be heard.

Truly having reached the peak of the sword———No, that fog-spouting clear katana, that was already a Demon Sword having brought about, events outside of common sense were happening.

This drawn sword’s incarnation was that, just by touching that blade, even invisible things would die.

“I was waiting for this.———A chance to cross swords with you.”

“.....Cecilus-kun, I have already fought with you before. That match was, to me, of great significance. Why is it you..”

“Definitely, my body with its sword.———In a life-or-death match, someone to meet face-to-face.”

My first katana, 『Saint Sword』Murasame with gleaming light drawn.

My second katana, 『Demon Sword』Masayume desires to cut, the beauty within it reveals.

Residing in the world,『Saint Sword』,『Demon Sword』,『Dragon Sword』, ten are, and of those, two pieces———No

“———『Dragon Sword』Reid.”

Always besides the『Sword Saint』, but only against opponents suitable for it ever drawn, that white glowing sword revealed itself.

The feeling of that drawn sword's sound, that it was the Dragon Sword weapon there was no mistake.

“You must already know, Reinhard-san. In front of us lies a wall.”

Each other, Saint Sword, Demon Sword, Dragon Sword held in hand, these extraordinary existences faced. Standing apart, as the distance narrowed, the world feared its collision, and the atmosphere distorted.

“For those who arrive at a certain spot, the way in front of them is blocked with a wall. No matter what, they are unable to overcome it. There are some who will sacrifice something to conquer it. Something like that is impossible for me. But if I do not cross that wall, I can't just stay like that myself.”

“———”

“There was, an invitation from the boss. A way to break through that wall....But in the end, to cross swords with you, to genuinely struggle for life against you was———Well, just as he said it, to clutch at straws, it was that feeling.”

“Straw.....?”

“A drowning man, is what I mean.”

As a drowning man, Cecilus Segmunt had, at this place, came to this one solution.

Or perhaps, when as a swordsman he had learned of his wind, was this inevitable?

At that wide-eyed『Sword Saint』, Cecilus curved his lips.

And, laughed. With a laughing face cutting down others, that『Blue Lightning』, knew.

“We're drowning, Reinhard van Astrea. Saying it like my employer would, we

are, what we desire most all plunging into it. Not once having seen that bastard called 『Oboreru』at that, but we are all falling into it.”

“———”

Swallowing his breath, Reinhard.

At that, lowering his body, by the handles wielding two swords,

“———Swordsman, Cecilus Segmunt.”

Not Vollakia Empire, not 『Blue Lighting』———those other titles were unnecessary.

This body, as just one swordsman, looked ahead at the way of the heavenly sword.

———Lightning, claps of thunder, tore through Pandemonium.

A whirlwind of blood, raged.



Chapter 12

— — — The battle inside Pandemonium continued.

The aftershocks from the fight, felt as vigorous shocks and tremors, even echoed through Emilia's inner room.

The light hanging from the ceiling was strongly shaking. Watching the dust tossed up from it while lying in bed, Emilia was being forced to make a choice.

“ — — — — ”

I'm staying here, was what she was saying.

Or that was, “Please stay”, a desperate plea like that.

Whether to believe that and wait, or to ignore that and run away.

About her circumstances, her inner thoughts were lost, and she was putting off her choice.

But

“Lia, the end has come.”

“Eeh.....”

While that fierce battle’s shaking continued, at the Emilia lying in bed Puck spoke.

With shaking fierce eyes gazing at the ceiling, with short arms crossed Puck was tilting up their nose.

Hearing that it was the end, Emilia swallowed.

Yet again, I couldn’t do anything.

Pushing off her choices, the consequences of not choosing as a result were received.

That’s a cowardly act, she was aware inside, and moreover she——

She had, pushed her position onto Subaru———,

“———Reinhard is here. It’s Subaru’s loss.

“———”

Emilia’s thoughts, at Puck’s continued words froze.

“Eeh”

Thoughts she had not firmly grasped it, and unable to speak but making sounds, Emilia opened her eyes wide.

Hearing that it was the end, Emilia had been certain of Subaru’s victory. That she never for a moment doubted it, Emilia had only realized at that moment.

Natsuki Subaru does not lose.

No matter what opponent comes, with his selfish excuses and tenacity and abusing human distrust he always grasped victory. Anything he could think of any subordinate he could find commanding them, by any means necessary he destroyed his enemy.

And, when tired of thinking, and needing a moment of peace he came to find Emilia.

Definitely, Subaru was going to be coming to her room, Emilia had been believing that.

“Until today, I’ve never rushed Lia’s choices, but this time it can’t be helped. That you must make a decision, it’s come to that.”

“To make, a choice.....”

“Whether to stay here, or to leave here, yes.”

To what extent he knew, in that calm Puck’s voice was certainty.

At Emilia tightly twisting up her sheets, Puck gazed down at. In that expression, their usual relaxed appearance was completely gone, and compassion for their beloved child was strong instead.

At that lost, lovely child, her uncertainty viewing, was a parent’s eyes.

“It looks like Subaru has been restricting information well all this time. The organization’s activities, there isn’t any sign of Lia being involved in them. Well, Lia really wasn’t involved at all. But comparatively having been with them for so long.. There would definitely be those that were suspicious. This was a necessary precaution.”

“Wasn’t involved at all, then, what kind of position was I in?”

“From Roswaal’s mansion you were kidnapped, and locked away, it’s a common story. Then this, those people breaking Pandemonium apart, to you would seem like rescuers.”

At this unexpected explanation, Emilia just stiffly stood.

That Emilia had been brought out of Roswaal’s mansion against her will was true. And that she had been angered by it, and had disliked Subaru for it was also truth.

However, at that clinging, pleading Subaru she had not refused, and that to protect his time with Emilia he had been desperate, those were also truths.

Having accepted it, was Emilia really unrelated to his methods, could that be

said?

Isn't arguing just that, the height of shamelessness?

"Lia, if you just wait here nicely, as a poor princess your rescuers will aid you, but....."

While speaking as if he was whispering, Puck landed on Emilia's thin shoulder. And then, nearing her cheek, that cat's unspoken next words Emilia understood to the point of feeling sick.

If she waited here, she would be rescued as a victim.

However, if Emilia left by her own power, then she would be a perpetrator that had been acting of her own free will.

Facing that truth, there wasn't even a moment of hesitation.

"———"

Rising, Emilia put her hand on that white room's only door.

To open from the outside, a complicated authentication procedure was needed, so Subaru, and Frederica who was entrusted, with her care were the only two who could cross through.

"Subaru, you baka....."

Touching the shattered door's remains with the palm of her hand, Emilia murmured in a weak voice. Originally, this structure had been created to break easily for her and her alone. In other words, Subaru had made it so one day Emilia could escape.

That bird cage's door was always, from a single resolution of that bird inside, had been designed to break.

That this was because, Emilia could never try to escape, whether Subaru had been looking down on her like that.

Or maybe, that it was out of Subaru's kindness. That he had wanted to respect Emilia's desires to run away if she chose, she didn't know.

That answer, she wanted to hear it straight from Subaru's lips, she thought.

———At the end of her time during which she couldn't choose anything, it

was the answer Emilia had decided.

Chapter 13

Coming out of the reception room, with Halibel running through the castle. 『Purge King』, that young boss, his master,———Natsuki Subaru was smiling.

“Taking Felt as a hostage, I wonder if that might have been a good idea.....”

Then, could Reinhard’s movement be tied up?

———No, rather than that, gaining Reinhard’s wrath, and having to fight the 『Sword Saint』powered up with emotion seemed more likely.

Just like that, was the flow of the simulation.

Somehow, while Pandemonium was collapsing, that it would become like this, he was thinking.

“At the boss’s feelings, might be having some fun.....”

Looking back. The path towards here

Just how much, suffering had he caused, taking many people’s weaknesses, receiving hate, ruling over his opponents lives, on a whim taking them——.

———No, a whim, it was never there.

If he was thought of as playing around, that was a very big misunderstanding.

To solve that, having worked hard, there being no meaning to put in effort, he had never thought that.

———Subaru was afraid of people. Terribly so.

Outwardly approaching with a smile, in truth within himself was hiding cunning slyness. With that kind of heart, he hid the truth. People moving about with myriad intentions, he feared.

Those people with him together, whether to believe them or not, to worry about that was idiotic.

And so Subaru had decided on a way to simplify managing human relationships.

All human beings told lies.

So, even if all humans hated Subaru, there was still no problem in that kind of world being built.

There was a weakness no matter who the person. A family, a lover, wealth, dreams, hope.

Because of that———

“If the weaknesses of every human being in the world, could be caught.”

Then, only Subaru, would not have to doubt anyone.

In a black and white world, in a world lacking any hues which could not be trusted, feeding on loathing, he could live comfortably.

“———”

Following Subaru, aiding in his escape was Halibel.

That Halibel's figure, to Subaru did not look to be their true form.— — —His appearance looked black and white. White and black, with only those two colors he appeared to him.

“— — — —”

Appearing in monochrome like that, Halibel was not the only one.

Now, the world as it appeared to Subaru, had without exception lost its colors and grown to have but two.

People, objects, paintings, tools, jewelry, magic stones, fresh blood, water, all were black and white.

Blood and water seemed no different, and from each other soup and poison also were not distinguishable.

Everything in monochrome. It was black and white.

In such a world, that which looked colorful to Subaru, were only a few.

That only those were real, Subaru was believing in that.

Everything else is fake, Subaru was believing like that.

Beatrice was.

Emilia was.

And, only— —, and.

Anyway, all others, Subaru could not believe in them.

Everything else other than them, it truly looked faded.

Not becoming lies, only the real

Natsuki Subaru's saving, killing, deciding, really only

".....From Reinhard, I had been expecting a little."

Perhaps, before that day –If they were really a relation from before the colors had gone away, that their hues would not have faded away, he had kept hoping.

However, he had appeared to Subaru just as black and white as someone he had just met for the first time. That expectation failing him, that formerly vivid Reinhard looked now to Subaru like a blob of white. It looked dirty.

In the end, Reinhard was also the child of man.

There was no doubt that he, too, continued to live on while lying. It was only that.

"Master———!"

Within the castle, running towards Subaru, next to him a loud voice called.

What could be seen, from the other side of the corridor running towards them, was the long-haired maid Frederica. Though hard to classify, that face's strong impression was easy enough to remember.

Subaru had, secretly found Frederica to his liking. And so——,

"Resolve yourself———!"

Setting down her foot, sincerely looking to take his life, he thought that shouting side of her was cute as well.

Of course, that Frederica's actions, by Kararagi's strongest would not be tolerated.

"Ah, eug!"

The dagger in her hand being taken away, Frederica with her arm broken had been pushed up against the wall. At the Halibel who had done this, Frederica could only stare with her head tilted to the side.

"Why, are you, Halibel-sama? In this situation, if things have fallen into disarray, that person.....!"

"You could kill him. That you're thinking that, I too know well. Children caught by their weakness, by killing Su-san would desire to be freed, even I know that well."

There, Halibel gazed at Frederica with narrowed eyes. In that light seen closely, from Frederica's thin throat a quiet sound rang.

"Unfortunately, I don't follow boss because of my weaknesses. To pay back Su-san's kindness, that's why I serve him."

"A kindness!? From this man, kindness? Stop playing around.....!"

Held tight against the wall, with bloodshot eyes Frederica glared at Subaru. Those already sharp fangs grew, and those thin feminine fingers, began transforming into a thick, strong and beast-like state.

“No matter what.....!”

“Su-san?”

Next to that hard-working, struggling Frederica, he had at some point come to stand.

Frederica widened her eyes, and called out to Halibel, but Subaru did not pause. That Frederica desperately lifted her arm, and slashed Subaru’s neck.

At that moment, the scarf wrapped around his throat came undone and fluttered away away——.

“———Hu.”

Frederica, seeing this, from deep in her throat made a sound.

Halibel, too, seeing that for the first time in front of him, revealed a faint surprise.

——On Natsuki Subaru’s neck, clearly left, were marks shaped like fingers.

“It won’t do, Frederica. I can’t die for that black-and-white you.”

“———”

At that frozen Frederica, Subaru drew his face close and asserted with certainty.

Perhaps, if it was Frederica, then he hoped that she may have had some color. But, even at this crucial moment, Frederica remained without.

“Halibel-san,.....Take Frederica, and run.”

“.....Su-san, probably, the traitor that dragged in that『Sword Saint』was-”

“I know.”

Gazing at that Frederica unable to move an inch, Subaru cut off Halibel’s words.

Even without saying it, you could tell. It was understandable that Frederica had secretly done such things, if it would bring about the end of her current treatment.

——No, it was not limited to just Frederica. If not her, that someone else would have. That it had been just her was a miscalculation.

“You don’t have to come back, Halibel-san. I will, in my own way, go settle things.”

“————”

“If you want to return my kindness, this is enough. In the first place, you had no reason to feel gratitude.....I was, just being cunning after all.”

Shaking his head, Subaru smiled lightly at Halibel.

Halibel had, perhaps, regarding Subaru had seriously been caring for him. Nevertheless, from Halibel he could not see any color either.

Perhaps, once the color was lost, it would never really return again.

The right to believe in something, it was because Subaru had lost that.
So now, not one would the world color for him, it may be that.

If so, from now on, to cling onto there was only——.

“With Su-san, I had wanted to be proper friends.”

“.....If I had not run away, that might have been.”

Accepting Subaru’s intentions, Halibel, with those short words, simply said goodbye.

Subaru, too, felt that exchanging more between them would be inappropriate.

But in the end, at that person who could have become a friend, he wanted to look cool.

“Frederica.”

“———”

At that call, Frederica slowly turned towards him.

At his maid who had already lost her morale, Subaru was hesitant about how to convey it, but.

To pass it along to her, because he had heard that,

“The food, was always delicious, she wanted to tell you that.”

———Perhaps, that strange expression, Frederica did not understand the meaning of it.

To the end, in her eyes, Natsuki Subaru must have appeared as a monster.

That is fine. Even if it is like that, it does not matter. Thinking that he had acted.

The result he had wanted to see, he did not get that, but.

“Then, where should I go, I wonder.”

Halibel took Frederica and, fading into the shadows, disappeared.

Left behind, Natsuki Subaru was alone in the collapse of his dreams.

Pandemonium shook constantly, evidence that somewhere Reinhard and Cecilus’ battle was continuing, but he could hear voices from afar calling for revenge barging in, showing that not only Reinhard, but opponents who had seized the opportunity could now be found here.

Foe, foe, foe. Only foes.

Having lived that way it could not be helped.

“———”

Subaru had reached a fork, in his path he hesitated, just for a moment in deciding where to go.

Going right, to the room of Emilia who had supported his weak self.

Going left, what his weak self had taken as a kind of support, that———.

“———Umu.”

Where to go, when faced with the option, it was at that moment.

Someone running up with a sharp knife stabbed it into his side.

Chapter 14

In a strange castle within a strange landscape, the barefoot Emilia was running.

Though having spent a year inside Pandemonium, what Emilia knew of the castle was only white. Outside of her room, and past the inside of the building, was completely unexplored for Emilia.

And that still did not change. Emilia's interest was not focused on this world.

Now, Emilia's concern was, only for the boy that had kept called for her, it was only that one person.

“——Emilia-sama!”

Called by her name, with a surprised expression Emilia stopped in her steps.

Here and then broken and having lost its shape, in that white corridor of Pandemonium. Near a cracked window, having called Emilia and stopped, was that fiery haired blue-eyed young man.

“Reinhard.....”

“Have you been well, Emilia-sama? I am glad to be able to meet you again.”

Even in this place, adhering to a knight's courtesy and posture, he was too brave and elegant.

Having run to that discovered Emilia's side and bowing his head was that young man, Reinhard van Astrea. But at his appearance, Emilia was shaking with bewildered wide eyes.

“Reinhard, that’s a serious wound. Are you alright?”

“There is no need to worry. That it is a light wound, cannot quite be said, but.”

Saying that, at Emilia’s words Reinhard relaxed his lips.

But that Reinhard’s appearance, to him, was a state which was unimaginable.

Covering his body were innumerable wounds, and even now without stopping, were dripping red droplets of blood in the white corridor. On that noble and fearless cheeks were scattered about sticking strands of crimson hair, and in his breath which never seemed never was now a definite trace of fatigue in its rhythm, and on his face.

And that white knight’s uniform was dirtied and covered in blood, and what was shocking above all— —,

“Your, sword.”

“Here, that this is a time for the『Dragon Sword』to be drawn, the sword has judged it to be that.”

That never-drawn, never needed sword, passed down through the Astreas, 『Dragon Sword』Reid with white light shone.

That blade, in this castle, against whom had he wielded it? Against whom would he wield it in the future?

“Anyway, that Emilia-sama is safe is fortunate.....With me, let us depart from here. There is a dragon carriage waiting outside the castle. With it, to Lugnica-”

“To Luginica.....Where, is this?”

“Here is, at the edge of a Kararagi City-State on a vibrant red hill....Finding the organization took great effort, but through the efforts of a competent intelligence officer and a spy.”

While answering Emilia’s questions, Reinhard was regarding his surroundings warily.

That even now the shaking continued meant that somewhere in this castle battle was continuing to take place. Reinhard also would want to head to cover his allies.

However covered in wounds he was, he was still the Kingdom’s strongest——No, the world’s strongest man.

If caught by him, then to even break down Pandemonium was only a matter of time.

Without him——.

“Emilia-sama, and now this place——”

Let us depart from it hastily, Reinhard might have been trying to say.

But, those words, by the Emilia who had her back turned, was suddenly interrupted.

“————”

It was but an instant.

From the back, hitting Reinhard’s abdomen, a sword of ice pierced clean

through. That chill of ice invaded his bloodstream, destroying his insides with invading cold. The『Sword Saint』, at that never-before felt shock coughed up blood.

“Emilia, now-”

“Ah”

Reinhard, still unable to understand what had happened, fell onto his knees. Watching that appearance, Emilia blankly stared at her own white fingers.

What she had done, she was realizing that it was really an unexpected act.

———If this had been a betrayal from Emilia’s true heart, Reinhard could have blocked.

But if it was not an attack which held hostility and intent to kill, Reinhard’s intuitive reaction could not be used to avoid it. Of, if his Divine Blessings had been working properly, definitely Reinhard’s defense would not have been able to be penetrated either.

But, this place was Pandemonium, and that Emilia herself could not make up her own mind———That had, in Reinhard, left a fatal gap.

“I, can’t.....Not that. Subaru, no. Reinhard, not that. Subaru, I will not let be hurt. Subaru, I, need.....”

As if saying she did not want it, shaking her head, Emilia with her real intentions now supported her actions.

That sudden act, the reason for unconsciously attacking Reinhard, that was that his existence had shattered Pandemonium and was targeting Natsuki Subaru, she had realized that.

And, knowing that, it was instinctively all right not to stop herself, it was

because she had thought that.

Emilia, in unconsciously protecting Subaru, had no choice but to kill Reinhard.

“Subaru is, my.....”

That matter, arriving at this, Emilia understood her own feelings.

Again and again, Subaru had come looking for her, and she watched on as he earned his rest. During that time, Emilia had also been saved.

——Just as Subaru needed Emilia, Emilia had also needed Subaru.

“I will, keep him. If I, don’t protect Subaru, then.....”

“Emilia-sama, that is.....”

“——Puck! Please!”

Cold wind blowing, that silver fur in the white corridor beautifully fluttered.

Suddenly, at his flesh freezing as it was subjected to severe wind, Reinhard drawing a line of blood in the air strongly flew back. And, coughing mixed with blood he lifted his sword.

Those sky-blue eyes regarded in his gaze the『Witch of Glaciation』and the『Beast of the End』, lined up.

“Sorry, Reinhard. Lia’s wishes are my hopes. If you’re that weakened, even I might win. You can think of it as catlike cruelty.”

“Please, Reinhard. Return like this. Leave me and Subaru alone.”

“——That, is not possible.”

Even having caused this situation, still trying to find a satisfactory solution. At that Emilia, Reinhard shook his head.

Already negotiations had broken down. When the other party had poured energy into a surprise attack from the rear———No, perhaps Reinhard himself, even considering his wound, may have accepted the offer of reconciliation if the situation allowed. But Reinhard’s belief, however, was that this was already a situation which did not allow for that.

“As the head of『Pleiades』,『Purge King』Natsuki Subaru has already, starting with the murder of Roswaal L. Mathers, of the people of the Vollachia Empire, Kararagi City-States, and the Holy Kingdom of Gusteko, in total has had 126,700 people killed.”

“Only in damage directly done is that number counted. When considering the indirect damage he caused to increase the number of casualties, that number rises up another level of magnitude. No matter what, it is not an evil that can be left ignored.”

Reinhard’s words had a serious resonance and held a plea.

By listening to his words and learning of Natsuki Subaru’s evil deeds, that he was hoping for a change of heart from Emilia, there was a feeling like that.

In truth, Emilia had received a shock. Stuck in her room, having been left only to the role of watching over Subaru’s sleeping face, she had not known of any

of his wrongdoing. That by killing Roswaal, she had been pulled out of that mansion, she had vaguely guessed, but.

Struck by that shock, Emilia bowed her head.

Shock, there was definitely a shock. But Emilia's deeply-felt shock, was not from disappointment about the weight and number of Subaru's sins——,

“——Sorry, Reinhard. Still, to me, Subaru is precious.”

Even having learned about those evil acts, her obsession with Natsuki Subaru had not wavered at all, learning that was the source of her shock. Emilia's feelings, even knowing the truth, had not changed.

“——Euh.”

Towards Emilia that had spoken so, Reinhard bit his lip. And soon raising his face and directing his drawn Dragon Sword,

“——Of the『Sword Saint』bloodline, Reinhard van Astrea.”

“I'm Emilia. Just, Emilia.”

Having each named themselves, at that next moment, a white shock destroyed the uppermost floor of Pandemonium.

Chapter 15

“Damn, it.....Fucking....That, damn...Bastard...!”

Inside that collapsing castle, Subaru while swearing was falteringly running.

Beneath those swaying feet, drip-drip drops of blood fell——At his left armpit, where the assassin had attacked, the knife was still stuck, and his brain was endlessly warning him about it.

“That black and white kid.....If there is a next time, I’ll definitely kill you.....!”

Cold sweat dripping, leaning on the corridor wall, that Subaru was still moving.

“More than this is beyond the scope of my work. Natsuki-san. Then, be careful.”

From the enemy saving the boss, and coolly running away, with a single courageous word.———Praising something like that, Subaru did not have such hobbies.

To be precise, work he did not wish to have to do, was what that man had been doing. That pure humiliation of passing over the enemy in his haste had his disappointment turn to fury.

However, even releasing that anger, in this situation achieving that seemed impossible.

“The last chance to act along, that last moment to say what’s most fitting, huh.....”

Prick-prick , touching that left armpit that hurt as if burned, Subaru murmured gloomily.

When he thought about what he had done, that someday he would receive his just deserts he had known for sure. Even then, to postpone that moment of meeting retribution all the way to hell was the plan, but in the end a criminal’s petty tricks—— Since having started he had gone not three years before having found his limit, it was pitiful.

The dictator’s final words were that.

His distrust at the end which had been excessive, there was no doubt it had spurred on this destruction.

However, he had no regrets.

If he had done this, if they had done that, those kinds of obvious mistakes did not come to mind. Simply, searching for a path in this world that had gone wrong, Subaru had just been struggling.

As much as if he were drowning. As if he had falling in, he was only desperate for breath.

Just from that——,

“Subaru.”

“———”

Leaving a trail of blood, crawling through that hallway, someone called out to that Subaru.

At that moment, not knowing the identity of that voice, Subaru furrowed his brows.—That there were no straws to grasp was not it. It was just that, that voice, he did not know why he was hearing it here.

Because her room was on the opposite side of this place, and if intending to escape, there was no reason to be here.

And so——

“Euh—oh!

“I’m relieved, Subaru.....It turned out I can meet you properly.”

“Emilia.....?”

Having been run into by that coming Emilia, being pushed about in the corridor, now seeing that beautiful face close, with that Subaru could accept it was really happening.

In that monochrome world silver, lavender, and soft pink lips were colored.

Emilia only, as if uniquely taught to the world, was being painted with vibrant hues..

“——But then, why?”

The world was coloring in Emilia's appearance, but Subaru could not understand the situation.

Definite warmth, and hugging to the point of being painful, Subaru was receiving from Emilia.

Since always, calling for her had been one-sided from Subaru, so why had she in this situation, to him——,

“.....Emilia, you're hurt.”

“It's ok, really. Truly, nothing happened, it's all-peaceful.”

That clinging Emilia was looking at him again, while smiling and pretending to be strong she was covered in wounds.

That wonderful silver hair was disheveled, and portions had been cut. That white thin pajama was torn and bloodied. On her bare feet there were also some torn-open wounds.

To prevent this from happening, on her in truth a number of defenses should have been left.

There, for her to suffer this would not forgive was a great spirit, who would have been with her together.

“What has Puck been doing.....”

“Puck is.....Mm-hmm, that story is, now, anyhow is well, anyhow it's all right.....”

“——?”

For a moment, in Emilia's eyes hesitation brushed past, but it was hidden

beneath quickly shutting eyelids.

That reaction, Subaru was suspicious of, but when Emilia opened them again, that slightly seen hesitation was nowhere to be found.

“Subaru, let’s run away together. If it’s now, nobody will be chasing after us.”

“——Run away, with, me?

“Yes. There is someone outside. I am not saying something strange, you know.”

After letting out a little anger, Emilia poked Subaru’s nose with a finger. At that bizarre act, above Subaru a question mark floated up.

Originally, Emilia would have been harboring hatred for Subaru.

“But still, since you’re nice, I had just been pampered.....”

“——Is it, I wonder? I was, something like that I have been thinking.”

“Emilia?”

His hand on his chest, as if Emilia had coldly spoke, as if feeling meaningless from those words, he lowered the corners of his eyes.

That hesitation brushing past her heart, was it that Subaru had abducted her, was it that she had spent so much time here? How many times had she gazed at that hated opponent’s sleeping face?

In that time Subaru had received salvation, but to Emilia it would have been filled with humiliation.— —.

“Ah, that I was angry at Subaru, I did think that. But, it was reaaally only at the beginning..... From then, that Subaru’s help I was definitely receiving, I thought that.”

“From me, receiving help.....?”

“Because it was me that, Subaru had been needing. Nobody would ever need me, that was how I had felt. And Subaru had freed me of that, so.....”

Codependency, such words surfaced inside Subaru’s mind.

Just as Subaru needed Emilia’s presence for peace of mind, Emilia had, definitely, at that time, inevitably within her needed relationships, this he had concluded. And so the pair, each in turn relying on the other, had fallen into a codependent relationship.

“I want to be with Subaru. So, let’s run away?”

“.....Like that, you saying it, makes me happy, but.”

Responding while stuttering, Subaru could not accept Emilia’s confession yet.

He had received a big shock. Inside his heart he had feelings, but his thinking drew out more realistic views in reply.

What Emilia had said, running away with her was not possible.

Reinhard was coming. Even saying that Cecilus would blocking him, outside the castle, to conquer the 『Purge King』 there would be gathered a massive crowd of enemies.

Now outside the castle Subaru did not have a single ally. His numerous tricks to catch potential enemies in this situation would not work. Those potential enemies had now become sure ones.

Taking Emilia and running away, it was not realistic at all.

Natsuki Subaru was to meet his end here. Here, would be his last——,

“——Then, I'll die together with you.”

“———”

At that moment, Subaru, more than when he was stabbed or when Reinhard first appeared, or when he realized it was his end became stunned.

That smiling Emilia gazed on at Subaru, and with words containing love and definite affection said.

If Natsuki Subaru was finished, Emilia also, here———,

“I'll finish it together for you. You, in a place where you won't need me, I don't want to stay somewhere like that.”

“——Ah.”

“Please, Subaru. I, need you. I wish you would come with me.”

Against his chest, Emilia stuck closer. Hot droplets and sighs brushed against him, and Subaru felt strongly that the exact opposite of what he needed was intensely perceptible.

Just as he had clung onto Emilia, Emilia was now clinging onto him.

All along, Subaru had been needing Emilia. From her, he had been receiving salvation.

And now, that Emilia needed Subaru, and was now asking for salvation.

Emilia was needing Subaru and was calling for saving of her own, now.

Now, that a moment like this would come, that thought had not even——.

“Subaru.....?”

Grabbing Emilia’s clinging shoulders, Subaru shoved her away.

And without moving stared into her eyes. Rising slowly, Subaru moved back.

Emilia was, looking up at Subaru.

To that Emilia, Subaru with shaking lips spoke.

“Ly, lying.....”

Violently reeling back his head, Subaru was watching Emilia——With fearful eyes, was watching.

“Suba,.....”

“No, please stop, stop it. Why, me, now come on, why! Stop it! Stop it stop it stop it! Please stop!”

Fear, it's fear.

There was fear. There was but fear. There was only fear. Only fear.

[illegible]

“——Stinking so much of the witch.”

He covered his ears

And held his head

That voice, its cry echoing, from that heard voice he tried to run away.

“— — As if you're unrelated to this, there is a limit to shameless attitudes!!”

Covering his ears

Holding his head,

That voice, its cry echoing even if he tried to escape he could not escape.

“— —My little sister is, too kind.”

“That was, do you think I would know of thaaaa— —a!!”

Screaming loud enough to vomit blood, Subaru towards the back, backwards crawled away.

Emilia stood, and asked what was going on. He could not hear it.

Sweetly, sweet, kind words, Subaru expected. It could not be heard.

Her words, voices, were not being heard. He did not want to hear it.

Do not act kindly. Gently treat me not.

Why now are you trying to lean on me?

That was impossible.

Just how many of my repeated evil deeds were you thinking about?

Emilia would not forgive that.

She would not have.

Had he been the one that changed that?

That Subaru leaning, his pathetic nose running, on that pajama-wearing Emilia's nights having relied on to overcome, had Natsuki Subaru's foolishness been what had changed Emilia?

Emilia too, had become different?

“I! If you hated me I would be happy! I, if you thought to avoid me I would have been glad!”

“———”

Emilia, was fading to gray.

Emilia’s colors faded, and into that monochrome world was washed away.

It’s a lie it was a lie. That deception faded away Subaru’s world.

That silver, and her gleaming eyes’ colored amethyst, those wonderful colors Emilia that Subaru believed in fell away, and her, only deceitful black-and-white stained, remained.

That reality he could not accept. Emilia was noble and would not ever change it was that.

Even a hated opponent, a clinging opponent she could not push away.

That kindness of mind was because, he had believed, that she was not forgiving Subaru, believing in that, Subaru had been able to fall into Emilia.

But if he understood that Emilia too also changes———.

“Don’t, act kindly towards me.....!”

“Anyway, something about me, you will come to hate, won’t you? You will suspect me, won’t you? Since I’m an obstacle, you will want to kill me, hate me,

curse me, and will betray me!”

“Then, please stay like you hate me from the start! Without changing, if you had just stayed like that I would have been happy! Hateful, just that, hateful, just that.....!”

Suddenly rising up, was anger.

No matter what, at this terrible world he fell into furor.

Trying to save that drowning self, he had reflexively struggled, had kept on breathing. But having come here finally, even Emilia, had betrayed Subaru.

——Things that changed, would always betray someday, so right now, was no different than having been betrayed already.

“When you’ll just betray me one day, pretending to be in love with me, please don’t you do that!! ”

“——Euh.”

Shakily, at Subaru reaching out, that black and white Emilia he shoved aside.

Pushed back with force, lacking support Emilia fell over in the hallway. For a moment, hesitation brushed against his chest, but Subaru without leaving any gaps painted over it with fear.

Even Emilia was not still calm.

That this might come to be someday, as the very last possibility he had considered had come to pass. —— That he would be needing this much, he had not been thinking.

——Emilia might, someday forgive Subaru.

That such a day would never come would be good he had been hoping, but it had definitely come to pass. And so for Subaru, left in this world of only black and white, only had his last resort left to rely on.

“——!!”

That fallen Emilia, was shouting something.

Leaving it behind his back, Subaru began to run.

The pain in his side could not be felt. He no longer cared about things like that.

As if everything was ending. In Subaru's world of water everything was disappearing.

What remained was, just that.

On that last straw which drowning Natsuki Subaru was hanging on, was just that——.

——With hatred that never changes, that existence which would not forgive Subaru.

“——!!”

That half-mad Emilia’s voice to that half-mad Subaru did not reach.

The collapse of Pandemonium, like the breakdown of his mind, accelerated its decline.



In that shattering world where color was disappearing, Subaru arrived.

“_____”

Not having collapsed, this was Natsuki Subaru's office.

A defense like what had been used for Emilia's room surrounded it in protection—— That was because, in this room, like Emilia, there was something which should never be broken there.

Not wanting to harm her, he had kept Emilia far away, but this was the opposite.

That which at his closest place having left, that was what Subaru opened.

On the other side of the door, the metal sound of chains linked to the wall rang.

And, while playing that sound of chains, those『Pink』colored eyes gazed at Subaru and spoke.

“——Finally, did you come wanting to die, Balse?”



——Because of hate alone desiring to kill him, that girl smiling had a blood red color.

『Drowning Life in Another World From Zero』 -fin-



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